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Is it ours?

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To be happy in Jesus
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IS IT OURS?

The Christianity

OF

Jesus Christ

IS IT OURS?

BY

MARK GUY PEARSE

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THE

CHRISTIANITY OF JESUS CHRIST

IS IT OURS?

CHAPTER THE FIRST

Christ's Idea of Christianity

THE many aspects in which Christianity presents itself may perhaps be summed up in these three—

First, *It is a revelation of God, and of our relation to Him.*

Second, *It is a means of individual salvation.*

Third, *It is the power of God for conquering and regenerating the world.*

Of these, the first and second are constantly kept to the front. But without the third the other two must ever be incomplete. The evils which those within the Church most deeply deplore, and which the foes of Christ fasten upon most readily for criticism and scorn, spring from the neglect of the great purpose of Christianity in relation to the world. Unless it be accepted in the completeness of Christ's claims and purposes, our religion may only perpetuate and intensify the very evils which He is come to remedy. The urgency of the appeal to men to seek their own salvation, the promises of religion for this world and for the world to come, can scarcely fail to minister to our very selfishness, unless we go on to learn our responsibility in reference to the world's conversion. We cannot fully realise any of the blessings of Christianity except as they tend through us to bless the world. We cannot know truly the Fatherhood of God except as it leads us into a true brotherliness toward all men. The salvation that is in Jesus Christ is ours exactly in propor-

tion as we die to ourselves and live to the glory of God and the good of others. We trace our holy religion to its Spring and Source, and find it in the Heart of the Eternal Father: GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON. There is the manner and the measure of the Father's love, and wherever that love dwells it must shape itself after the pattern seen in the mount. The Apostle of Love becomes again the indignant Son of Thunder at the thought of any manifestation of religion that stops short of this. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for* HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN? Loved with a love so wonderful, redeemed at a cost so infinite, there is but one proof of our love that will suffice—What is it? HEREBY PERCEIVE WE THE LOVE OF GOD, THAT HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US—*that* we accept and rest in; but the claim which grows out of that love, alas! we are slow to admit—WE OUGHT TO LAY DOWN

OUR LIVES FOR THE BRETHREN. Of that we stop short. We accept the love of God; we accept the gift of salvation; but of the third great purpose of religion—a power in us for the conversion of the world, we are content to remain in untroubled ignorance. This is the great hindrance to Christianity—un-Christlike Christians. To uplift and purify the religion of our time; to put into it the heroism and might of a conquering force, it is needful for us to search out Christ's idea of Christianity, and then with all our hearts to give ourselves up to it.

The purpose of God in giving His Son; the purpose of Jesus Christ our Saviour in all His life and death and resurrection; the purpose of the Holy Spirit in every breath of His influence within the Church, is one—*It is the salvation of the world.* And we are "of God" only as this purpose possesses us, and directs and controls our whole life.

Upon what, then, does the salvation of the world depend?

There are abundant promises which speak of the kingdoms of the world becoming the kingdoms of Christ—promises that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. He *must* reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. These glorious events shine ever before us—the Church's hope and joy and strength. From age to age the conviction abides that as the Almighty Father made the world, as the Son of God redeemed it, so assuredly the Holy Ghost is come to regenerate the world and to fill it with the glory of God.

But how is the work to be done? Churches and varied Church arrangements, preachers and workers of all sorts, we have more plentifully than ever before. Yet who of us is content with the progress of the Gospel? Is this England of ours a model of what Christianity can make of a nation? Think of its lust; its hideous squalor; its drunkenness; its gambling; its caste in the churches, rigid and haughty as any Hindoo distinction; its pride; its love of money; its haste

and eagerness to be rich at any cost and by any means. If this is all that Christianity can do for us, is it really worth while to go to the trouble of training men and sending them, at much expense, to the ends of the earth? Or, if there is a Power that can cast out these devils, what is it? Where is it? Why is it not felt and seen? Our hopes and our despair, our faith and our fears, may alike drive us honestly and earnestly to search into Christ's idea of Christianity. If it is the Divine plan for the world's salvation, why does it seem to fail in its purpose? Is it *lacking in power*, or is it *wrongly applied?* These are the questions which press upon us, demanding an answer.

Let us begin at the Acts of the Apostles, carefully looking at the first chapter, where the history of the Church commences.

THE FORMER TREATISE HAVE I MADE, O THEOPHILUS, OF ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN BOTH TO DO AND TO TEACH.

So St. Luke begins his second book. Very

notable is that word *began.* It is not the word that would ever be used of any other man when he was dead and buried—*Of all that He began both to do and to teach.* Whatever they may have been, when men go down into the grave the doing and teaching are over, though their influence may abide. But this was a beginning on earth *until the day in which He was taken up.* So, then, Christianity is that same Christ going on doing, and going on teaching, only in a new condition—He is now the risen Christ; and in a new method—through the Church which is His Body.

AFTER THAT HE THROUGH THE HOLY GHOST HAD GIVEN COMMANDMENTS UNTO THE APOSTLES WHOM HE HAD CHOSEN.

Again a strange saying, *Through the Holy Ghost had given commandments.* Had not Christ authority to say to one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh? Here is at once a great mystery and a simple fact. What the Holy Spirit did for the Lord Jesus we know not. But the result and outcome of the Holy

Spirit's work is most manifest. The record of it is from the pen of St. Luke, and his Gospel enables us to see of what he is thinking as he writes these words (St. Luke iv.) :—

AND JESUS RETURNED IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT INTO GALILEE. . . . AND HE CAME TO NAZARETH, WHERE HE HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP : AND, AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, HE WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH DAY, AND STOOD UP FOR TO READ.

Now, if there was any place where they knew the Lord Jesus, it was in this village of Nazareth. Everybody knew Him. He had grown up amongst them, one of themselves. But to-day they turned to each other in wonder, almost in doubt, asking, "Is not this Joseph's son?" None but gracious words ever came from those lips, but they never heard any words like these. They marvelled; their eyes were fastened upon Him. A force was amongst them such as they had never felt before. *It was the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Let us notice very carefully the lines that are

thus laid down from the beginning of the Christian Church. *Jesus Christ accepted exactly our human conditions of service, and wrought only in the same power as that which was to be the strength of His Church.* This is His starting-point, and here His great work begins—JESUS BEING FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST. Then the temptation follows immediately, for it finds its whole meaning and stress in the condition of service which Christ has accepted. It is a very shallow thought of the temptation which sees it only as having reference to Christ's hunger. It was the meeting between the Prince of this World, who claims authority over it, and the new Man, the second Adam, to whom was given dominion over the earth to subdue it. The temptation turned upon the method by which the victory was to be won. It were no triumph that God in His omnipotence should defeat any creature, though it were the fallen archangel. *That* had already been done. But that the *Man* Christ Jesus, with no other force than that which all men could share, should go

forth to destroy the dominion of Satan—this was a humiliation which the proud Prince of Hell might well dread, and a conflict for which he could gather his forces with some hope of victory. So the Tempter draws near. "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Let not Thine omnipotence lie unused, lest indeed it be unacknowledged. For Thy bodily need, and to preserve Thy life for Thy great work, put forth Thy Divine Power. Over men, of course, Thy control is to be moral only and spiritual; but here are *these stones*—coarse material upon which Thou canst indulge Thy power and relieve Thy want." Very notable is the first word of that Scripture which Jesus quotes in reply—"It is written, *Man*"—He had been addressed as the Son of God, but this now is the accepted position —"*Man* shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." His defence is not His own strength, but the sword of the Spirit.

Then comes the second temptation—very subtle is it. "If Thou be the Son of God, show

that Thy faith in God is sublime. Let a weak doubting world see how faith like Thine fears nothing, knows no peril. Put forth a superhuman trust to teach men trust—a godlike faith that men may believe in it." Again the quotation of a Scripture taken to Himself, and used for His defence, which has reference to poor Israel.

Then came the third temptation. "Well, Thou art going forth as a man to Thy work. The kingdoms of the world are mine. Thou wilt have to win them back by shame, by misery, by agony and bloody sweat and awful death upon the Cross. Against Thee shall be arrayed all the principalities and powers of earth and hell. Thy followers shall suffer as Thou dost; and through all the ages Thou wilt have to reckon with me. See now, they are at Thy feet—the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. They are mine. Think of Thyself. Think of Thy followers. Think of the good Thou couldst accomplish so easily and swiftly and certainly. If the world were Thine, and the glory, how couldst Thou end its woes,

and wipe away its tears, and fill it with Thy glory! I can give it to whom I will. It is Thine —all Thine—if for one single moment Thou wilt acknowledge my authority over it."

And there it lay—the world within His grasp; so easily won, so cheaply. And the other way so long, so dark, so dreadful—the way of the Cross and the grave! It was a splendid triumph when Jesus Christ, the Man filled with the Holy Ghost, waved it all aside, and bade Satan begone: "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

This was the life-long temptation of Christ, gathering its most dreadful force when He hung despised and rejected on the Cross, and about Him broke the storm of taunts—"Let Him save Himself"—"Come down from the Cross." To be possessed of Omnipotence, and yet to pass with such desires amidst such needs; to have such power in the face of such foes, and yet always to accept the human conditions of service—this was the sublime triumph of the Son of Man. He is

the human agent filled with the Holy Ghost. Miracles were wrought by Christ, but never *for* Christ: wrought by this same power of the Holy Ghost. He Himself announces this as the source of His strength, and the fitness for His work:—

AND WHEN HE HAD OPENED THE BOOK, HE FOUND THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR: HE HATH SENT ME TO HEAL THE BROKEN-HEARTED, TO PREACH DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET AT LIBERTY THEM THAT ARE BRUISED, TO PROCLAIM THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.

This is the great root-idea of Christianity—men and women carrying on Christ's work and living over again Christ's life in the power which fitted Him for His service—the power of the Holy Ghost. Miracles are to be wrought, not *for* the Church from without, but *by* the Church from within. God could bring most men instantly to their knees

in lowliest submission before Him; earthquakes, flashing meteors, great wants and perils from which prayer brought miraculous deliverance, should speedily secure that. But this cuts across the condition laid down by Christ from the first. The power which is to transform the world is from within men and not from without. The Spirit of God dwelling in Jesus Christ and filling Him with power—this is the starting-point of Christianity.

And now in all the consciousness of what the Holy Spirit did for Him the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples:—

AND BEING ASSEMBLED TOGETHER COMMANDED THEM THAT THEY SHOULD NOT DEPART FROM JERUSALEM, BUT WAIT FOR THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER, WHICH, SAITH HE, YE HAVE HEARD OF ME. FOR JOHN TRULY BAPTIZED WITH WATER; BUT YE SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY GHOST NOT MANY DAYS HENCE.

The mention of "days" seemed at once to define the restoration of that little Jewish kingdom to which their hopes were still limited.

WHEN THEY THEREFORE WERE COME TOGETHER, THEY ASKED OF HIM, SAYING, LORD, WILT THOU AT THIS TIME RESTORE AGAIN THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL? AND HE SAID, IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW TIMES OR SEASONS, WHICH THE FATHER HATH SET WITHIN HIS OWN AUTHORITY (R. V.)

Surely it were well to heed these words of our Master. If we *could* know the times or seasons, it were better we should not since He has spoken thus. What business have we to be prying into secrets of which the Lord has said it is not for us to know them? The Master means us to spend all our time in doing something every way better. If we had lived before Christ's coming, who of us would not have longed to be a prophet; to climb the hill and watch through the darkness for the first faint streak that told of His coming day? But now every one of us has a grander work to do than that of any prophet that ever lived. Nobler and more glorious than Isaiah, or Elijah or Moses, is the calling and purpose of

every Christian,—he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than these. Ours it is, not to point into the hazy distance and tell of a Christ that is *coming*,—ours it is to be filled with the Holy Ghost and to let men see a Christ *that is come*. Witnesses—not prophets ; this is our high calling.

But what concerns us most is the other part of the question and the answer. "Lord, wilt Thou bring back to Thyself the kingdoms of the world?" This was in effect the question, and thus we may put it. Here about their Master cluster the eager disciples—"WILT THOU? Thou hast triumphed over all Thy foes ; over Roman and Pharisee ; over Death and Hell ; and now Thou art come forth in the power of Thy resurrection — wilt Thou not complete Thy triumph and subdue Thine enemies?" Thus the Church ever stands, looking up with longing and wonder —"Lord, wilt THOU save the world? wilt THOU assert Thine authority ; and bring the nations to Thyself?"

What is the answer? the answer for all the ages? Jesus bent over them and said YE. They looked up; He looked down. They thought it all rested with Him,—and He laid that work upon them. YE—*Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon* YOU, *and* YE *shall be witnesses unto Me.* Then, as if there were nothing more to be said or done, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

YE—there it all rested henceforth. YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER. It is a word differing from that in the previous verse, which is also rendered power —that is *authority.* This is *force—dynamite* if you will, for the very word has of late been brought into our language.

If there is one word that sums up Christ's idea of Christianity as revealed in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, it is this word *Power.* The word is ever associated with the Holy Ghost. After the resurrection, when Christ declares that all power is given to Him, the word used is

authority; that is power when it is declared and acknowledged. Such is the triumph in which Christ's work ends. But the power in which He goes forth to His work is this *force.* This was "the power of the Spirit" in which He returned to Nazareth. It is the word used by Christ when He declared that *virtue* had gone out of Him; the rendering in the New Version is much more vigorous—"perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth." Christ did not only found a new philosophy; He brought into the world a force to destroy the works of the devil. Christianity is not only a theory or a revelation; it is a transforming might in the midst of men. It is not only a method of individual salvation; it is a power by which the kingdoms of this world are to be brought back to their rightful Owner. Christ was not only the Teacher of a loftier morality; but "with authority and power He commanded the unclean spirits, and they came out." And now taking up the word again, He declares to the company of

believers which constituted the Church—"Ye shall receive *power* after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me." This power was to come upon them, and thus should the kingdom be restored to the God of Israel. This and this only is the essential of Christianity as a conquering power in the world. Christianity began with the Incarnation—God in man—and this is the continuance of Christianity, —*God manifest in the flesh*—men and women filled with the Spirit of God. Everything without this avails nothing. Having this, everything else will follow.

Look at it. Think of it. A hundred and twenty men and women, having no patronage, no promise of any earthly favour ; no endowment, no wealth,—a company of men and women having to get their living by common daily toil, and busied with all the household duties of daily life — and yet *they* are to begin the conquests of Christianity! To them is entrusted a work which is to turn the world upside down! None so exalted but the

influence of this lowly company shall reach to them, until the throne of the Cæsars is claimed for Christ. None so far off but the power of this little band gathered in an upper room shall extend to them, until the world is knit into a brotherhood! Not a force is there on the earth, either of men or devils, but they shall overcome it, until every knee shall bow to their Master, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. A thing impossible, absurd, look at it as you will, until you admit this—*they are to be filled with the Holy Ghost.* Then difficulties melt into the empty air. Then there is no limit to their hopes, for there is no limit to their power. Their strength is not only "as the strength of ten"; it is as the strength of the Almighty. This is Christ's idea of Christianity; the idea not of man—it is infinitely too sublime—the idea of God.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

Our Idea of Christianity—Men and Methods

SO then the work of the world's salvation is to be wrought through us. *How do we of to-day accept the charge?*

Had we been in the place of the early Church we should probably have appointed a committee or council, consisting of a dozen of the most influential men, to consider the matter, and so at the very outset we should have transferred the interest and the responsibility from the whole Church to "the executive." Then, after many meetings and much delay, during which the ripest members of the little company would probably

have passed away, we should at last be ready to present a list of suggestions and recommendations after this fashion :—

"*First*, That the more gifted amongst the disciples be set apart to this work, and proceed at once to be trained and thoroughly qualified.

"*Second*, That after such training, those who understand how to reach the people, and can adopt the right methods, be accordingly sent forth.

"*Third*, That it is very desirable, so far as possible, to secure men whose hearts are filled with enthusiasm for the work, and that their motives be pure and unselfish.

"*Fourth*, That in every case it is essential that those who take part in this work have due authority ; that each be rightly and duly ordained and set apart for it.

"If each and all of these requirements are secured, and these conditions are complied with, we are warranted in expecting great results."

Go over these resolutions and see if they are not thoroughly orthodox. Do they not set forth all that we consider essential for the conquest of the world by the Church? Orthodox! the whole spirit and purpose of them is utterly away from that idea of Christianity which Christ laid down. We select and set apart men, and they are to take upon themselves the responsibility which the Lord Jesus Christ *has laid upon the whole Church.* We expect, or at any rate we desire, that the *minister* should be filled with the Holy Ghost, but as for the congregation—well, of course, it would be a good thing, but by no means of so much importance. Christ promises the gift to *all*, and *requires it of all.* For order's sake and for teaching it may be needful that there be bishops or overseers or superintendents, and that there be evangelists and deacons, but this "YE" singled none; it included all alike. The Holy Ghost fell upon them *all*, and they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost—the women as well as the men; the most obscure as well as the most distinguished; and

each went forth alike entrusted with the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; alike responsible for the overcoming of the world and for the establishing of His kingdom. This is the first great departure from the Christianity of Christ. The disciples of old time looked up to the Lord and said, "*Wilt Thou* restore again the Kingdom?" The Church of to-day does not look so high as that; it looks to the minister, and thinks *that* is his work, and he ought to do it. We have thrust the minister altogether out of his position. "*Ye* are the light of the world," said Christ alike to all His disciples. The minister is not the golden candlestick, stately and prominent, diffusing illumination; rather, his emblem is in the golden *snuffers* keeping all the lights bright and shining. Christ puts the work of the world's conversion upon the whole Church; but for the great body of Christians, Christianity is no more a power by which *they* are to subdue the world for the Lord Jesus; it is a pleasant arrangement by which they may find their way leisurely to Heaven; anything further is not in

their department; it belongs to the ministers at home and abroad, and their duty ends with their annual subscription.

Look again at the conditions which the Church of to-day considers essential to the triumph of Christianity over the world. *All these the Church had, and that more perfectly than can ever be the case again, when the Lord Jesus bade the disciples wait.* If this were all, it was utterly useless for them to stir.

Think of the immense and unequalled advantages which these men possessed. *Is the triumph of Christianity dependent upon men who are duly qualified and rightly trained?* The great Lord Himself, who knoweth the hearts of all men, chose these. He Himself was their Professor of Divinity. They had sat at the feet of Jesus, and learned of Him. What training could any have to equal this? To have been with Him, to have seen Him day after day, to have heard Him expounding the Word, to have gone in and out with Him—of all gifts and advantages surely this were the

greatest. How vividly could they tell of Him, whose memories treasured His utterances in His very tones! How could they set forth His deeds who themselves had seen these very wonders wrought! As they spake of Him, they could not fail to catch something of His look, His manner, His spirit. How powerfully could they preach the Gospel, to whom it was not a bare statement of events, but all instinct and throbbing with life! That great Example was ever before them. His image was graven on their minds and hearts. They knew Him not by an occasional visit, but by those years of daily, hourly intercourse, and by the closest, homeliest intimacy. Never again can any be trained as these had been; they were indeed Doctors of Divinity. And yet these were the men who were to wait for the power from on high.

Is the triumph of Christianity to be secured by right methods? These men knew the methods of their Master. Whatever there may be in successful method was theirs. Trained, not as we

train men, by isolation from the world and by making theology a matter of intellectual analysis and arrangement, but by direct and constant contact with the people, by contact with every variety of character. They were trained as doctors are trained, by dealing with the men and women whom they had to understand and to whom they had to minister—trained by the Good Physician Himself. Oh, who can ever have opportunity and advantage like theirs! By the daily service and ministry of the Son of Man, by His treatment of the good and the sinful, of the wise and of the foolish, of haughty Pharisee and lowly publican, of scornful Scribe and outcast sinner, of the sad and the suffering, of all sorts and conditions of men. If right methods will secure the triumph of Christianity let these men go forth at once, for they are indeed masters in arts. But these are they to whom Christ saith—WAIT.

Is the conquest of Christianity over the world to be secured by an enthusiastic love to Christ and by pure and unselfish motive in service? Here

again how vast was their advantage over ours! How every memory kindled a new love to their dear Lord! With every sight and every sound came something that brought Him to their minds. Time must have seemed to stand still at that hour of the Crucifixion. How often would their thoughts go over its scenes again, step by step, until all within them flamed with love; and the memory of their own blindness and desertion came like a great compulsion to a fuller service and completer consecration! Yet with all this they can do nothing. Even this is not their qualification for successful service. WAIT, is still the command.

Is the triumph of the Church a matter secured by the authority of her ministers? Is the needful power a matter of orders? Does it follow infallibly and of necessity that if the minister be rightly and duly ordained, success is secured and the secret of victory is of necessity his? Never again can there be such assured authority as theirs—called, commissioned, authorised, ordained

by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the great Head of the Church. Yet these are they who must wait; ministers, bishops, apostles, yet neither their position nor their titles availed them anything: and unless there be more than all this they must sit still, for they can do nothing. *Wait*, saith the Master. And they had to wait, day after day, although so well trained, qualified by the Lord Himself, yet they must tarry at Jerusalem. *Ye shall* RECEIVE *power;*—it could not be found in any advantage, in any wisdom, in any authority—*ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.* Training, method, motive, authority may be worth much when men have received the power from on high; but without the power of the Holy Ghost all these are nothing.

CHAPTER THE THIRD

Our Idea of Christianity—Money

LET us turn again to the little company of men and women into whose hands has been put this great work of restoring the kingdoms of the world to Christ. We cannot pretend for a moment that the conditions which have been suggested as essential to the success of such a work would be the only conditions named,—not even the first. There are needs very much less lofty and very much less spiritual that would occur to most of us if we were entrusted with a work so vast and so far-reaching. The first thought of our practical nineteenth

century would be this—*We shall want a great deal of Money.*

And if we were as poor as that little company of men and women to whom Christ spoke, what consternation and despair would come upon us as to the money! Where can it come from? If we open a subscription list we might perhaps get Joseph of Arimathea to head it, but as for us we can do nothing!

"We shall want a great deal of money"—what a familiar sound the phrase has! How natural it seems and how necessary! *We* measure our possibilities for the world's conversion by our money. It is the sum of our wants. The cry of the Church is Give, give, give; and the dream of the zealous is of the wonders they could do if only they had the money.

Now let us ask ourselves earnestly, *Why is it that in the beginning of this great work not a single word about money was ever spoken either by the Master or by the disciples?* If money is essential to this work why did not Jesus Christ secure it

for Himself when He went forth; and in turn secure a vast endowment for His disciples at the commencement of their work? Did He not know how much of the energy and heart and time of the Church would be taken up in raising the necessary funds? Did He not know that the Church would be crippled and hampered and her work sometimes actually given up for want of money? And yet He does not say one word about it. And when a very rich man comes to Him one day, He quietly bids him go and get rid of his money and then come and follow Him! What does it mean? There is a vague impression that in those times of intense spirituality and sweet simplicity they somehow managed without money. If that be so, then in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ let us strive to get back again to such a blessed condition. But, of course, they needed money as much as we do, and had a great deal less of it. How is it then that the early Church does not seem to have felt the need of that which is the supreme requisite of the Church to-day?

Christianity, as we see it in the New Testament, has no more to do with tithes than with incense or ephods. Jesus Christ gave no command or promise about money, except, indeed, that He told His disciples to provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in their purse.

"*But we must have money, of course*," says everybody, as if that ended all question, and as if everything must stand still until the money is given. Faith, heroism, enterprise for the Lord Jesus are all to be suppressed until the tithes are in the storehouse; then go forth and be as heroic as you please, only be very careful not to step beyond the funds in hand. It is, of course, very easy to sneer at all this as sentiment and sublime theory; that is a very little matter. The question is—Did the Lord Jesus Christ intend the success and triumph of the Church to depend in any degree upon money? *Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you;* is this condition dependent in the slightest degree upon the income of the Church? And yet we all

declare that we *must* have money. Do we really mean to assert that we believe in a system designed for the conquest of the whole world, and believe that its great Founder and Head has all power in heaven and in earth, and yet that His Church is perpetually on the point of failure for want of money! If we *must* have money, if money is essential for the triumph of Christianity, let us have the confidence to go to God and ask for it, and let us have the assurance that it will be given. Better every way to give up all faith than to believe that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and then that He should let the world's conversion stand still for want of money. "The gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." He needs no beggars. He depends upon no man's gifts. The fact is that there is not money enough in the world to *hire men to do this work, and there never will be.* When the Lord Jesus laid the work upon the whole Church He arranged it in such a way that no other method can ever succeed. Nothing, surely, can be further from

Christ's idea of Christianity than that the triumph of the Gospel should be more dependent upon rich men than upon good men.

Are we not off the lines which Christ laid down? Give every man an opportunity of giving for *his own sake*, but not as if either God or the Gospel were in anywise his debtor. Make it a man's privilege to give; but if it is other than that, be bold enough to count that God will not accept it and the Church is better without it. We are off the lines. We have departed from this great foundation truth of Christianity. Instead of *every* Christian seeking and claiming the power from on high for the subduing of the world to Christ, we have come to think that Christianity means the safety of our own souls—and as for everything else it can be done by money. And the Church cannot get money enough to do the work, and thank God it never will. *That is the first terrible mistake.*

And the second grows out of the first and aggravates the mischief a thousandfold. Since

Christianity is an arrangement for our selfish *security*, the next step is to arrange for our selfish *gratification* in everything that has to do with it. Huge sums of money may be lavished upon luxuries and elegancies which make the House of God the rich man's club, where a poor brother is an intruder. If *we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*, can we dare to make the very worship of our Crucified Redeemer that which ministers to our luxurious selfishness? Will Christ ever come and consecrate this kind of expenditure? There is no command to give money to the Church; but *that the Church care for the poor* is commanded again and again, and yet again. This is made the very test and proof of our religion. We want that outspoken Apostle, St. James, in our midst with his plain, strong words. MY BRETHREN, HAVE NOT THE FAITH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE LORD OF GLORY, WITH RESPECT OF PERSONS. FOR IF THERE COME INTO YOUR ASSEMBLY A MAN WITH A GOLD RING, IN GOODLY APPAREL, AND THERE COME

IN ALSO A POOR MAN IN VILE RAIMENT; AND YE HAVE RESPECT TO HIM THAT WEARETH THE GAY CLOTHING, AND SAY UNTO HIM, SIT THOU HERE IN A GOOD PLACE; AND SAY TO THE POOR, STAND THOU THERE, OR SIT UNDER MY FOOT-STOOL: DO YE NOT MAKE DISTINCTIONS AMONG YOURSELVES, AND BECOME JUDGES WITH EVIL THOUGHTS?[1] HEARKEN, MY BELOVED BRETHREN, HATH NOT GOD CHOSEN THE POOR OF THIS WORLD RICH IN FAITH, AND HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM WHICH HE HATH PROMISED TO THEM THAT LOVE HIM? BUT YE HAVE DESPISED THE POOR.

No, there is no such word in the Scriptures as that which we quote so complacently and with such authority—"We must have money, you know." It is written, YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER AFTER THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU—that, and that only, is the grand necessity. The fact is that Christ's idea of Christianity is the idea of every Christian being wholly consecrated to

[1] Marginal rendering, New Version.

Him. Its arrangements are all set and adjusted to that principle, and if we try to work it on any other we are beset and bewildered with failure. And for this let us devoutly thank God. Only a holy Church can ever be a conquering Church. There is no other force that can subdue the world. When "she looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun"—then is her victory assured: then is she "terrible as an army with banners."

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

Our Idea of Christianity—Intellectual Power

ONCE more let us join the little company to whom has been entrusted this great work of restoring the world to Christ. Let us try to see the vastness and difficulty of the work as they must have seen it. Thinking of the Rulers with their skill in crafty questions, the scoffing Sadducees, the Greeks with their learning and subtle philosophies; thinking of the great nations north and south of them—Phœnicia and Egypt—it would certainly have occurred to us as the most natural thing in the world to say, "WE SHALL NEED A GREAT DEAL OF INTELLECTUAL

POWER." In these clever times when everybody knows everything,—and often is none the wiser for it,—there is great need to look at this suggestion which we hear so frequently.

The Lord Jesus gives no promise of intellectual power. He Himself went forth from the midst of the people and lived ever as one of the people. Those who sneer at "popular preaching" must beware lest their arrow strike Him of whom it is recorded that "the common people heard Him gladly." His power for preaching was the power of the Holy Ghost; and of all the purposes for which He received the baptism of the Spirit this is placed first—that *the poor might have the Gospel preached unto them.* His very method of preaching in parables was a miracle of simplicity; for who that can understand anything is too little to hear stories like that of the Prodigal Son? Whilst it is true that "none ever spake like this Man," yet is it also true that Jesus was a children's Preacher. He chose to have about Him plain men who had no opportunity of study, and no splendid gifts of

intellect. His claim, as He stands in the midst of men and calls them to Himself, is that He is *meek and lowly in heart;* not on the ground of great intellectual attainments is it, but as stooping to make great things easy and great truths plain to the poor and needy, to the little and weak.

Later, when there came an Apostle trained in all the learning of the Jew and the Greek, he, of all men, spake most strongly against attempting to do the great work of Christianity by any "wisdom of words." There is much need to listen to his warning: CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE, BUT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL: NOT WITH WISDOM OF WORDS, LEST THE CROSS OF CHRIST BE MADE OF NONE EFFECT. The Divine authority which commissioned him to preach, equally forbade his preaching with wisdom of words. Of which passage writes F. W. Robertson: "The wisdom of which St. Paul speaks appears to have been of two kinds—speculative philosophy and eloquence. The Greeks had deified wisdom, and St. Paul's language was that which ought to be written

over the door of every school—*We worship not Minerva but Christ.* It is important to dwell upon this, for there is in our day a marvellous idolatry of talent; it is a strange and a grievous thing to see how men bow down before genius and success. Draw the distinction sharp and firm between these two things—*goodness* is one thing, *talent* another. The Son of Man came, not as a scribe, but as a poor working man. He was a Teacher, but not a Rabbi. When once the idolatry of talent enters the Church then farewell to spirituality; when men ask their teachers not for that which will make them more humble and Godlike, but for the excitement of an intellectual banquet, then farewell to Christian progress."

These are strong words, coming from one of the most gifted preachers of this age; but much stronger are the words of St. Paul: CHRIST SENT ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL: NOT WITH WISDOM OF WORDS, LEST THE CROSS OF CHRIST SHOULD BE MADE OF NONE EFFECT. Preaching the Gospel so cleverly as to undo and to destroy that

which is preached! Preaching the Gospel, and yet only withering it and burying it! There is a well-known essay of Macaulay's in which he writes of the Puritans. I have read it a score of times, yet scarcely once to think of the Puritans,—they have always been lost in the brilliance with which they are described. *The Cross of Christ of none effect!* So must it be whenever preacher or people are turned aside from *Him* by eloquence or philosophies *about* Him. If the people go forth saying, "What a preacher!" instead of saying "What a Saviour!" then is Christ hidden, and *the Cross of Christ is made of none effect.* Of all destruction, surely this is the most terrible—to destroy the Gospel by preaching it. These are words of awful meaning. They smite us. They spoil our poor little treasures, and turn them into shame and grief. Alas, we are afraid to trust the homely simplicity of the Gospel. And how difficult it is to avoid the peril, since that selfishness which seeks only its own safety in religion, and its own luxury in worship, demands a preacher who shall make

the sermon an entertainment. Let the words go sinking down into the depths of the soul. Preach the Gospel, but not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ—the very shame and agony and curse of Christ—be made of none effect.

YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER AFTER THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU. This is the *one* condition of success. No natural gift can suffice; and when any man has the power of God, failure is impossible. Yet do not let us suppose for a moment that there is no room in Christianity for intellectual power, or for gifts of eloquence. That is wrong every way. If some people make the Cross of Christ of none effect through wisdom of words, others make it of none effect through lack of wisdom. There are some good but melancholy and mistaken persons who put dulness for piety, and count that dreariness is sacred; their sign of grace is a groan, and they prove their religion by their misery. The worth of a sermon with them is estimated not by its height, or depth, or breadth, but by its length; and the great virtue of preach-

ing is as an exercise of patience. All this is quite as far from the truth as is any "wisdom of words." Of the wise man we read that he "sought to find out acceptable words"—"*words of delight*," as it is literally. And of a greater than Solomon it is recorded that the people heard Him *gladly*. Christianity invites and consecrates every gift of God, and every grace and art of which man is capable. There is room for money; room for enterprise, and methods, and learning, and genius. Nowhere can talent find so true and lofty an exercise, or indeed so sublime an inspiration as in the service of Christ. If eloquence is begotten of burning conviction, where should there be such masters of oratory as where God has touched men's lips with His fire; and where men look out into the realities of eternity and the infinities of God's love? All gifts are good when they are lost in the great purpose of the Gospel; but any gifts are perilous just in proportion as preacher or people are conscious of them. In a *sham*-fight everybody admires uni-

forms, the music, the horses, the precision of the march; but in a real fight there is a desperate earnestness that cannot stay to admire anything, that just girds itself up for death or victory. If there be the intensity, the downright earnestness, the baptism of fire, which longs to make Christ the Conqueror, then the more gifts the better. But if that baptism be lacking, gifts are a peril and a snare. When Christ says of men *Ye must be born again*, what folly is it to go on playing with that which is utterly insufficient to accomplish the result, and then to wonder that nothing is accomplished! Nobody ever was or ever will be saved only through the preaching of the Gospel. Preaching may indeed destroy the Gospel which is preached. *Ye shall receive power* to preach as for all else *after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.* Until then our preaching is vain and ever must be. It is the Gospel *applied and enforced by the Holy Ghost* which alone saves men.

St. Paul goes on at some length to state the reason for his dread of all "wisdom of words,"

and it is well for us carefully to consider this Scripture (1 Corinthians i. 18).

FOR THE WORD OF THE CROSS IS TO THEM THAT PERISH FOOLISHNESS. The very word "Cross" meant alike to Jew and Greek all that was most revolting. All that is associated with the word "gallows"—and even more of indignity and shame—gathered about the word cross. There was not in the language another word that summed up so much that was offensive. A punishment, of which Cicero tells us, that the very name ought never to come near the thoughts or eyes or ears of a Roman. And now, in the Crucified, the Jews were to find their Messiah, and the Greeks were to discover the Truth! Nothing could be more utterly hopeless, nothing more absurd. It is this very hopelessness of success, from a human standpoint, which shuts us up to the power of God. The Cross is ever and must always be foolishness to men except as they are enlightened of the Holy Ghost,—to them it is the power of God unto salvation.

FOR IT IS WRITTEN, I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE PRUDENCE OF THE PRUDENT WILL I REJECT. The reference seems to be to the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib, when Israel sought their safety in an alliance with Egypt. From a human standpoint it was a mark of their wisdom, but it was altogether contrary to the covenant and command of God. And their wisdom was destroyed by their being cut off from Egypt; it was a reed that could not support any, but which only pierced the hand that leaned on it. Not from Egypt—invariably a type of the world—but from Heaven was to come their deliverance. What of this great host since the Lord was their Helper! What of Rabshakeh's rude defiance, when God was in their midst! Why should they "go down" to Egypt when they could so easily look up to the Most High? How foolish, how useless their "wisdom"! In the stillness of the night there went forth the angel of the Lord, noiseless, resistless; and when Israel arose in the morning their dreaded foes were all

"dead corpses" as the record says. Full of meaning is the whole reference, as if St. Paul would thus set forth the vastness of the work, the worthlessness of merely human wisdom, the power of God to save, and the complete triumph which is ours if only we have Him as our Strength. And then as if he caught the gladness of those for whom such victory had been wrought, he cries, "Where is the wise man? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Then the Apostle goes on to inquire as to *what wisdom had done in either knowing God or making Him known.* What had intellectualism achieved? The golden age of wisdom had come and gone. Homer had sung, and Aristotle had taught, and Demosthenes had spoken, and Socrates had lived and died, and yet in Athens stood the altar to the Unknown God, and the restless world still looked vainly for a Saviour. Now let the wisdom of the world stand aside and make room

for the foolishness of the Word, which is the power of God unto salvation.

"And look amongst yourselves," he seems to say. "Those who have accepted the truth and are now to give it forth to others. There are not amongst us many wise, not many mighty, not many noble. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the mighty. Human wisdom could not originate the Gospel, human wisdom could not spread it at first, and human wisdom cannot sustain it now. Our wisdom is in Christ and Christ in us. Therefore, as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

"So then," he continues, "when I came to you I came not with excellency of speech, and this I did of set purpose. I did not speak to you with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that YOUR FAITH SHOULD NOT STAND IN THE WISDOM OF MEN, BUT IN THE POWER OF GOD." That is everything. We can persuade men to

agree with us—but what of that? We can give them notions, theories, opinions, creeds, and these only do but mock them. "I see," men say; "but how can I *be* that which I see?" Alas! the light is not the life. Power is lacking. Duties, ideals, dreams, may pass before me in surpassing loveliness, but what of that if I live just as far from my ideal as before? What folly is our wisdom if these be only words! I want an Almighty Helper, an abiding Presence, a transforming Power. Here it is—THAT YOUR FAITH SHOULD NOT STAND IN THE WISDOM OF MEN, BUT IN THE POWER OF GOD. I can give a hungry man a splendid notion of a million pounds. I can tell him of how many acres he should be the happy lord; of the stately dwellings he could call his own; of the servants that should wait upon him; of the horses and carriages, the flocks and herds, the varied luxuries he could command. And when I have done shall he go forth admiring the brilliant account of it all! Why, what hungry man would not rather have a threepenny bit—a

thing by which he could buy a loaf of bread! Alas! it is only in religion that men play the fool thus, and are content with splendid notions.

HOWBEIT WE SPEAK WISDOM AMONG THEM THAT ARE PERFECT. What did the Apostle mean? Perfect people want no wisdom. They are wise indeed, and none can teach them anything. Here St. Paul gives us yet another reason against dependence upon wisdom in this great work. Sin did not destroy in any wise our bodily organs, nor our mental perceptions; but it did destroy the faculty of which St. Paul is here speaking—that spiritual sense by which we know God. We cannot see God with the eye, nor does the reason know God. We can perceive, perhaps, the need of some great First Cause of things, but I do not know God because I admit a logical necessity. How, then, do I know God? By a spiritual consciousness; by a faculty through which I commune with Him, and trust Him, and rest in His care, and rejoice in His love, and set myself for His service;—a consciousness as

distinct, as clear, and as reliable as any consciousness of my being. So then St. Paul says that he is speaking to those who have had this spiritual faculty restored; and to come with wisdom of words only would be to address the intellect, whereas, to meet the need of the spirit, he must come with the power of the Spirit. *As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.* It is strange that this passage should have been so commonly supposed to refer to Heaven. The Apostle simply declares that the eye cannot see God, nor the ear hear Him, nor can the natural man receive the things of God. BUT GOD HATH REVEALED THEM UNTO US BY HIS SPIRIT. So, then, because the realm of these things of God is spiritual and spiritual only, human wisdom is of itself incapable of either perceiving or receiving them,—and therefore here nothing can avail but the Holy Spirit of God. And as our knowledge of ourselves is only by the spirit that is in us, so

the knowledge of God can only be made known by His Spirit which is given to us.

The letter killeth. There is an awfully deadening effect in the endless talking about Jesus, the familiarity with the name and the story ; an awfully deadening effect in making Him the theme of our orations and arguments. How painfully sharp is the contrast between the sermon and the life ! We listen to what the preacher says about the Saviour, and then we go away from the word to the world, from the mere sound to the solid realities of life. How *real* it is all outside—the streets, the people, the work, the wants of every day and hour ! And, alas ! how *unreal* is all that has to do with religion. Christ is a name, a memory, a proposition for a problem, a text for a sermon, a starting-point for theories. How true is it—*the letter killeth.* But—*The Spirit giveth life.* "He shall testify of Me"; "He shall glorify Me." Then how real a Presence is the Lord Jesus, the Blessed Brother whose very Hand doth uphold us ; whose love is our strength, and whose

service is our joy; who comes to abide with us and commune with us; real as earth, and self, and sin and life are real—the abiding and unchanging, the only Reality.

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS WHICH ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US OF GOD. That is the point at which our knowledge and God's revelation meet. All gifts are good that enable us to take possession of and to *realise* what God has given. Note the word—*the things that are given* —the things which God *hath prepared* are now spoken of as *given.*

Here is revealed to us very clearly the distinct work of the Holy Spirit—*to put us in possession of all that God has given to us in Christ Jesus.* God's love can never be greater, deeper, richer towards us than it is now—or indeed than it ever has been. His purpose concerning us can never be more glorious. Unasked, unsought, God has given us Christ. And in giving us Christ God has given us all that He ever can give. This is He by Whom God made the worlds. Having given us

Christ, the Father saith to us, "All that I have is thine." But the *knowledge* of what is given to us in Christ is to be opened up to us and put into our possession. And this is the work of the Spirit —to glorify Christ, to manifest Him unto us, to make Him our own as the *realised* gift of God. The heir to an estate may be but an infant of a day old, lying unconscious in the mother's arms, but the estate is his as legally and completely as it ever can be his. It is the *knowledge* of his possession that the years will reveal to him. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit is come to do for us—that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God. He who knoweth the things, *the deep things* of God, is come to open up to us the height and depth of the fulness which is ours in Christ.

That we might know the things that ARE FREELY GIVEN TO US OF GOD. This is the most pitiable thing under Heaven—not that we are so poor, but that we are so rich and do not know it! I have heard of some man somewhere who was worth

three millions of money and he imagined himself a pauper, and lived upon two shillings and sixpence a week and a loaf of bread. What was he, pauper or millionaire? Both;—millionaire in possibility, pauper in what he realised. Alas! how many Christians are precisely that—pauper-millionaires;—living on half-a-crown a week and a loaf of bread when all the unsearchable riches of Christ are their own—*if they did but know it.* We may know Christ on earth quite as much as we hope to know Him in Heaven; and there are aspects in which we need to know Him now in which we need not and indeed cannot know Him then. The Blessed Spirit is come to reveal Jesus as fitted exactly to all the common wants of our daily life and our earthly circumstances. He is to be Patience for every worry, and Rest in our toil, and Strength for every difficulty, and in everything Love and Truth and Purity. The work of the Spirit, which He is come on purpose to accomplish, is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ exactly as we need to know Him—an abiding Brotherly

Presence, able, waiting, glad to help us and to make us more than conquerors.

But this is not all. The gift of Christ is *God's gift to the world.* All about us are the lonely, needy souls, knowing not of Him who can heal all sorrows and cast out all ills. And now our work comes in. Through us the Spirit is to reveal this gift ; through us His love, His pity, His helpfulness are to be made known ; in all the temper and spirit of our lives His Beauty is to be revealed. We are to go forth into the midst of men, and everywhere through us His truth and tenderness are to be set forth. For this we have been brought to the knowledge of His truth and faith in Him, that through us the world about us may know the things that are freely given of God. And for this work it is not logical skill that we need ; not great intellect, not splendid gifts, but the whole-hearted surrender of ourselves to this purpose, and the baptism of the Spirit to accomplish it. YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER AFTER THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU, AND YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

Christ's Idea of Christianity—Individuality

YE—Christ made room for all the disciples in all the variety of their character. There was no one chosen type to which they were to conform—*shall be witnesses unto Me.* There was room for endless diversity of methods. There was no one system laid down which they were rigidly to follow. Instead of saying one "Shibboleth" with precisely the same pronunciation and exactly the same accent, they began by speaking a dozen diverse tongues. The idea of Christianity is an individual consecration to Christ, for His glory and for the good of men, with room for every man's individuality.

Have not our rigid ecclesiastical and financial systems checked and even suppressed individual enterprise? Do we not need a great deal more generous freedom and opportunity for men to work for Christ in their own way? It is a very common thing for men and women of good position to go to all sorts of places—to the heat of the tropics, to the perils of Alpine climbing, to the winter of the Arctic regions, in order to gratify taste for travel, or for research, or for pleasure,—going at their own charges, and putting up with all kinds of rude discomforts. How is it that so very few, either men or women, ever think of going without waiting to be sent, or wanting to be paid, into the midst of such hardships for Christ's sake? Yet with such a King as ours, and with such a commission as that which He gives to *all* His disciples, we should have looked for it to be a thing most common. We should expect to see merchants retiring at middle age from business in order to give themselves up to Christ's service; and men and women going down to live among

their poorest and neediest brothers and sisters for the glory of the Lord Jesus, who laid down His life for us. Is the love of the Saviour the only love that fails to kindle enthusiasm, courage, endurance? Or is it that the churches lack the faith to suggest, much less to expect, any such devotion? Surely it should rouse the indignation of every man who loves God or who loves his neighbour that an expenditure of money and trouble, which is called self-indulgence when it is to catch fish or to hunt beasts *for pleasure*, should be called self-sacrifice when it is to save men's lives! Do not let us doubt for a moment that Christ will send us many such heroes as have been of old if only the Church can make room for them.

In science the great discoveries have not been made by appointment and direction of sundry learned societies, but by an individual devotion to some one object, by fresh and original experiments. A man makes a hobby of his work, and surrenders everything to it—thought, money, brain, heart,—

working away perhaps for years, until the result is obtained. It is thus that great discoveries have been made and perfected, thus that great social problems have been solved, and it is thus that they have to be solved still. But unlike science with its welcome, the Church has been terribly alarmed at *individuality*. Hobby-riders fill her with terror. New methods seem to suggest failure in the past, and that injures our pride. New methods smack of heresy, because they are new. There is in the churches a tendency to stateliness and dignity, which cannot do with much energy in any direction. Enthusiasm is apt to be self-willed, and sometimes verges on the noisy, and the churches can do with anything that is dead and dull sooner than with exuberant life that makes a noise. Philip *ran*, and Peter took a beggar by the hand, and Jesus Christ took the part of a woman that was a sinner and healed her; but such courses offend the refined tastes of a cultured and learned ecclesiasticism.

Is there anything sadder than the long list of

prophets whom the Church has first stoned and then erected splendid sepulchres to their memory? Foreign Missions and Sunday Schools were both denounced as full of peril. How pitiable is the history of the churches in relation to the great questions of Slavery and Total Abstinence and the Opium Traffic and Social Purity! How pitiable it is to-day in its dread of the people! When the London City Mission was commenced some fifty years ago, the little company that originated it was crushed between the upper and nether wheels of ecclesiastical machinery, and narrowly escaped being ground to powder. It is amusing, and yet it is very sad, to read how that the Bishop of the diocese forbad his clergy to recognise it because it proposed to *employ lay agents!* and the Nonconformists of all sorts denounced it equally because it employed *paid lay agents!* And for these reasons the great mass of the people lying outside the churches might perish! Is it not too much the same still—that the churches are unable to acknowledge a new idea, at any rate until it

is grown up — standing aloof and blighting it with suspicion, if not at once blasting it with a thunderbolt?

In business, great fortunes are not often made by the jog-trot of old routine and ancient methods, but by men who can adapt, improve, extend—men who can manufacture a new article, or who go out to find a new market; who put daring, push, resoluteness into their work. The great fortunes of the age have been made perhaps most generally by men who have spent vast sums and great efforts to turn to account *waste products*. Now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, do let us encourage men and women everywhere to try their genius at saving the waste of humanity round about us—the waste of men and women and little children. Surely there is awful need to find many new methods of successful service. And for this work be assured that God will give us men of genius and invention—only do not let the churches condemn them as heretics, or suspect them as fanatics. God does not waste His trea-

sures, and may well withhold such gifts if they are going to be frowned down by stately dignitaries who will not tolerate what they cannot control. We want more use of men and women in the ardour and flame of their first love to Jesus. We want to encourage men and women to try *their own ways of doing good*, without waiting for any other authority than the prompting of their love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost. We want to make it an intolerable shame only to do nothing for such a Saviour, and in so great a harvest. We surely want a much less rigid distinction between the minister and the layman. When the day of Pentecost came they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost, and then indeed were they all Right Reverend Fathers and Mothers in God. They *all* spake with tongues, not as they heard other people speak, not as they thought they ought to speak, but as *the Holy Ghost gave them utterance.* They did not wait for any other permission, nor did they wait until they could speak with finished

elocution or in proper sermonic form. And to us as much as to them is it spoken—"*Ye* shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and *ye* shall be witnesses unto Me." Do not let us think that this means great disorder, confusion, lawlessness. Even if it did mean any such glorious confusion as they had on the day of Pentecost, let us not be frightened at that. Better that surely, a thousand times better, than the grim propriety of death. That the spirit of the prophets be subject to the prophets is an apostolical injunction to which we render fullest honour; but whilst we reserve the right to silence bores and intruders *if we can*, let us be careful not to strangle any good man with red tape because he has his own notions, which may possibly be as good as ours. Do not put out the fire of God because it leaps and roars after its own fashion, instead of assuming a respectable dulness, or because the flame is not of regulation size and pattern. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—therefore give it room and opportunity. The Church has again

and again lost much good wine because she would keep to her old bottles. The Episcopal Church lost John Wesley; and since then, had God sent us another Wesley, probably Methodism itself could scarcely have found him room. It is cheaper, and altogether better, to have now and then a new bottle, even though the shape be a little different and the capacity a little greater.

But, reader, what concerns you and me above all things else is this—that *we* do give *ourselves* with all our hearts to Christ, for the fulfilment of His largest purposes. How great things can He do with any who is surrendered wholly to Him! Therefore *now*, look up to Him who looketh down upon you. Accept the call and claim which comes from Him. Let yourself go—body, soul, and spirit, to the great tides and currents of God's love that sweep about us. There is a music in the wind which has no voice until it reaches the tremulous and responsive wire—then it leaps forth in its power to thrill men. There is a meaning and a beauty and a glory in things, all unrevealed

until they find the poet's soul—then they flash upon the world. There are a thousand forces in the earth, but they lie unknown until there comes some man of invention, by whom they are tamed and harnessed for service. And the Christian is of higher rank than these did he but know it. About us is an infinite Love, an almighty Power, a yearning Pity. Christ is what He is because He gathered this fulness into Himself, and poured it forth in human words of blessing, and stretched out hands through which its healing fell upon the people, and lived it day by day "in perfect loveliness of deeds." And every man is a true Christian exactly to the degree in which this great love of God is turned to use and simple helpfulness. It is a wise and beautiful saying, "He does the most for God's great world who does the best in his own little world." This is the meaning and purpose of our religion, that we should surrender every man his own little world to God, in everything for His good pleasure, that it be filled with His glory;—to put Him first in our thoughts, and

in our desires, and in our ambitions ; to measure life's greatness and joy by the opportunity it gives us for service to Christ. For this let us gird ourselves with a great longing. For this let us expect and claim the power of the Holy Ghost,—that day by day, in all the round of life, we seek to bring in righteousness—*rightness*—which is the gold for the streets of the City of God ; in everything to seek after purity of thought and purity of motive, which are as the crystal walls ; and then in all to minister patience, and brotherliness, and love, which are as the balmy atmosphere of Heaven.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

Christ's Idea of Christianity—The Promised Power

YE *shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*—such was the promise. Now it was precisely this element of power to subdue and possess the world which the religion of Jesus Christ seemed to lack; and it was this power which the condition of these early disciples made most to be desired. The authority of Rome stretched on every side, haughty and triumphant. Her resistless legions were everywhere; her word was law; and little by little all that the Jew held most sacred was being lost.

This was quite as keenly felt by the Christians

as by the Jews, for the disciples of Jerusalem did not in any wise forsake the Temple, or any of its rites or services because they met together to break bread in the name of Jesus Christ. And now, in the presence of this invincible Rome, Christianity seemed but a poor defence compared with Judaism. So it came about that when the converts of Jerusalem were threatened with being cut off from Israel, their safety seemed to lie rather in giving up Christianity than in forsaking the religion of their fathers. Doubtless they found in the religion of Jesus Christ a tenderness, a beauty, a compassion which they had not known before. But Judaism had in it a might and majesty which were much better fitted to cope with the evils about them. They admired the loveliness of Christ's character and His wonderful wisdom, and in happier circumstances it would be a joy to follow Him ; but a Leader who bade them love their enemies, and who Himself had died at their hands, did not give much promise of deliverance from the Roman power.

Let us remember, too, how very much easier it is for us to associate power with Christ than it was for them. For us the Blessed Lord is uplifted from our hard and common humanity ; so that for us the difficulty is to realise His true brotherhood and oneness. Our thought of Him is hallowed and beautified by all the most sacred associations of our lives ; our imagination of Him is shaped by the very masterpieces of art. But to them that humanity stood out in all its coarse want and hardship ; in all the surroundings of poverty and common toil. Here were men who had worked with Him, who had journeyed at His side, He wearied and dust-stained as one of themselves. His kinsmen were with them and talked of Him as their own. And above all, they looked back to that life of lowliness through the death of the Cross ; ever it stood out on the crest of the hill in all its naked shame and black dishonour. So they thought of Jesus,—a man born in poverty, often hungry and homeless, dependent upon the bounty of those about Him ; opposed by their

rulers as an enemy to their nation; condemned by the priests as a blasphemer of their religion. They had followed Him amidst the mob, and had seen Him dying an accursed death. Now, whilst in this sorrow and death love found its fullest claim and completest consecration, it is easy to see that in moments of doubt and fear these memories would come back to trouble the followers of Jesus. If their Master suffered thus, what hope was there for the disciple?

And now from the lips of this same Christ comes the promise—*Ye shall receive power—power to subdue the world and to restore it to Him.*

We have seen this Power as it is set forth in the Gospels. It will be alike interesting and profitable every way to trace this power as it is set forth in the Epistles. We need the assurance of it to-day as much as the disciples needed it of old. A great belief in the power that is with us would cure the evils that grow out of our doubt and weakness. We live a long way below the idea of Omnipotence, and yet that is ours. Our

enterprises for Christ are by no means in keeping with our vast endowments. Our business is absurdly little compared with our capital. We measure our difficulties by human estimates only. We talk of temptations and trials as if we had to meet them all in our own strength. If we are *of God* then is there only one motto, one boast, that is great enough to tell of our strength—*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

We will turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews, who, as the disciples of Jerusalem, were most exposed to peril, and who, therefore, needed most fully to know the power which is in Christ.

At the outset the writer begins with that which was the very stronghold and refuge of the Jew—*the ministry of the angels.* The presence of the angels gave to their religion a heavenly loftiness, a stateliness, a majesty which seemed to be wanting in Christianity. The law was spoken of as received by "the disposition of angels." The Jew thought of them as the sacred guardians of the

very centre and heart of his religion ; the golden cherubim with wings outstretched hovered over the ark of the covenant. As in their perplexity and fear Israel recalled the past, these watchful sentinels seemed to stand, excelling in strength, having charge over them to keep them in all their ways, and ever ready to smite in their defence. What glorious deliverances had been wrought again and again by "the angel of the Lord!" In the bitterness of Egyptian bondage, the angel swept over the land, and in a single night the people were made free, and, laden with the spoils of their taskmasters, they marched out triumphantly to claim the land of promise. In times that were sad and troubled like these, when there was neither king nor prophet nor judge, the angel of the Lord led Gideon forth to victory, and had smitten the Midianites. An angel had told of Samson's birth and directed his upbringing that he might destroy the Philistines. When the host of Assyria proudly demanded the surrender of Jerusalem and defied the living God, an angel

went forth in the darkness and smote the hosts. They remembered how that Elisha was in Dothan, and the Syrian king sent an army of men to take him, and they compassed the city until escape was impossible; then at the prophet's prayer the young man's eyes were opened, and, lo! all round about him the mountain was full of horses of fire, and chariots of fire, and the enemy was smitten with blindness.

What wonder, then, that at such a time these threatened Hebrews should cling to a religion which had such records of deliverance! And when, beside these treasured memories, there came that scene of Calvary, where He hung without an angel to pity Him or any to deliver, little wonder that their hearts sank within them. It was true that angels sang at His coming, and sat at His tomb with glad tidings of the resurrection, but they wanted more than sweet hymns; they wanted the destroying angel winging his way through the darkness, breathing death upon Israel's foes.

Now to meet this thought of the Hebrew, so natural at such a time, the writer of the Epistle sets forth the power of Christ as compared with the angels. "You fear that as the disciples of Christ you will lose the ministry of the angels," he seems to say. No, indeed. In Him only is their protecting service secured. Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified and risen Lord, is infinitely more than they are. They wait upon Him, hearkening to the voice of His word, and going forth at His bidding to minister to them that are heirs of His salvation. Then the writer turns to their own Scriptures. Nothing could be more masterly or sublime than the way in which he exalts the Redeemer. *To which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee?* The quotation is from the second Psalm. Full of the grandest poetry, it was only at a time of such peril that the stately music of its triumph could be fully appreciated. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and*

the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed. All untroubled, unmoved, there sitteth on the Throne of the Heavens the Eternal I AM, and turning to the Son He declares Him to be the Eternal THOU ART. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.* To-day, since His Divine relationship could know no yesterday, no to-morrow. Where in the volume of the Book is there any language like this spoken to the angels? They are but creatures, sinless and of vast intelligence, but for ever separated from the Creator by an infinite distance. And by a word that cannot be broken, to this Son is promised the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.

Again, the writer turns to the great testimonies of the Scriptures, as if his heart were inditing a good matter, and he must speak the things which were written concerning the King. He takes them to the forty-fifth Psalm, which the Jews themselves applied to the Messiah, and which,

indeed, it is impossible to apply to any other. They must have seen again the Lord Jesus, and again have heard the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. *Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever.* But this meek and lowly One is now the Captain of the Lord's host. *Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under Thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre.*

This, then, is their Christ and ours; no more only the poor and lowly brother of men, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, but seated upon the throne of His glory, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What stability and assurance was theirs in Him! In His presence what of the

haughty Cæsar; what of all the forces of Rome! The Sceptre of righteousness which sways the world is in the Hand of the Crucified.

Now comes the next step in the argument up to which this first chapter leads. *The way in which this Almighty Christ is going to subdue the world.* That it is not to be accomplished by the power of the angels, nor by the power of God outside and apart from man. *The power in which Christ went forth to His work—the power which Christ promised to the disciples—is the only power which can claim the subjection of the earth.*

Let us follow the argument. UNTO THE ANGELS HATH HE NOT PUT IN SUBJECTION THE WORLD TO COME. The Greek word is the same as that used in the fifth verse of the first chapter, and means the inhabited world, the world of men. To whom then is this world subject?

The writer goes on to quote from the eighth Psalm—a Psalm of David. Across the plains, where the flock lies in the dewy stillness of the

night, we hear the shepherd's hymn of adoration. *O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.* Strange words! as if the Psalmist looked and saw that deliverance and victory were to come not by might nor power, but by the spirit of the Holy Child, by meekness and lowliness and trust. Certainly as we read we cannot but see Jesus.

Then David looked into the heights above him, where hung the hosts of silent stars. Their calmness and purity seemed to shame the shallow restless life. Thoughts of infinite space filled him; thoughts of the vast dominion which stretched on every side. Amidst these things how insignificant the span of human life—here to-day, to-morrow in the dust. *Lord, what is man that* THOU *art mindful of him?*

Yet this "considering" brought its own

deliverance. For what were the bright worlds and all infinite space until man came to meditate upon them? The power to awe and to impress with vastness and duration was *within him*, and was greater than all these things about him. He who thinks, alone is king. And then, too, his lowly work as shepherd testified to his kingship. Was not the world made for man, and did not all things wait until he came as rightful lord to claim it? The earth was a wilderness until his toil made it a garden. The fruits were poor and scanty till his authority was felt by them. The plains were swamps or deserts until they came under his dominion and yielded their golden crops. The woods had no use, and the metals lay as idle ores until he turned them to noble ends. The sea was a barrier of nations until he made it his highway. He sets the lawless winds to further his voyages or to grind his corn. And the very stars themselves that seemed to be so much above him, man bade them be his great time-pieces to measure the

days and to mark off the seasons. Man is the appointed king.

Then in the stillness of that night-season, and with these meditations, came another thought which set upon him a crown of pure gold and gave to him a glorious dominion indeed. *Lord, what is man, that* THOU *art mindful of him? or the son of man, that* THOU *visitest him?* God can visit man; and man can entertain his Maker. Within him are depths into which God can enter —a spirit with which God can commune. And in this very possibility is there not some dim yet awful indication and promise of the Incarnation— God manifest in the flesh? Was this the very purpose of man's being, the key to the mystery of his existence—that God should dwell in him? And that Man in whom God should indeed abide, and through whom God should work perfectly, under Him all things should be put, and in such an One humanity should be crowned with glory and honour.

Thus, then, the world waited for its King in

such an ideal man. Certainly the King was not come yet. David was sometimes the slave, and not the king; the victim, and not the conqueror. The world waited for One who should render a perfect obedience, that He might claim a perfect dominion. When He cometh, *we see* JESUS.

And now He who has overcome the world by the power of the Holy Ghost saith to us—YE SHALL *receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.* And in that power we are to go forth and to continue and to complete the victory of Christ, until the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

This is Christ's idea of Christianity. It is not only a method for the pardon of our sins; it is not only a power by which we shall one day get to Heaven. It is the power by which we are led into our true position as those who have dominion over the world to subdue it. The second Adam hath regained for us our heritage, and now by the might of indwelling God we are

to go forth and claim the world as His, and for Him.

Let us see clearly of what this dominion over the "world" consists, for the word is one of those which has had all the meaning beaten out of it, so that it has become little more than a sound. Man's original condition was one of rest toward the world, but of infinite desire for God.[1] There was a perfect contentment as to circumstances; the affections went out in their strength after God. But with sin came the complete reversing of this order; and man's condition became one of unconcern and indifference toward God, whilst all the desire and longing of the heart went out after the world. Before the Fall man's natural gravitation was upward toward God; after the Fall it was downward toward the earth. Now it is this evil which Christ is come to undo. His very first sermon was a re-enthronement of man in his true position—freedom from anxiety and care for the world, that he might always and in everything

[1] Goulbourn's *Pursuit of Holiness.*

" seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Christ reveals to us the love and care of the Heavenly Father that He may put the world down and back in its right place. It was the promise of the victory, but the method was not yet revealed. It is by the indwelling power of God—the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us—that dominion over the world is ours. Care puts the man under the world, sets the world on top of his shoulders for him to carry, therefore saith Christ, Be not careful. But when Christ reigns in the heart, then are we like Adam in Paradise—the world is under our feet, and all the man is above it, with his affections set upon God.

So, then, do not run away from the world as if it were a foe that could not be fought. Do not abuse and condemn the world as if it were the devil's—it is the Lord's, and His is the fulness thereof. Now our calling is so to live that through us the power of God may put the world in its right place. Let us go forth every day with a

whole-hearted surrender of ourselves to Christ for this end, that through us He may subdue and claim and possess the world as His own. Thus and thus only shall He in the fullest and truest sense "restore again the kingdom to Israel."

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

The Disciples before and after Pentecost

ST. PAUL prays for the Christian converts at Ephesus, that there may be given unto them *the spirit of wisdom and revelation*, the eyes of their heart being opened, that they might know *what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.* That he should give thanks for them, having heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their love unto all the saints, is not strange; but that *then* he should begin to pray for them, and determine to pray without ceasing, may well appear strange. Had

they not received the end of his prayers and their own when they found in Christ "the Gospel of their salvation," and when they "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise?" Now, relieved from anxiety on their account, the Apostle may begin to think of others who are still unsaved. But rather *now* he seems to make these the special objects of his prayer. Our great anxiety is about those who are *outside* the Church. St. Paul's anxiety is about those who are *inside* the Church. The reason lies very near the surface. A holy Church means a conquered world and a glorified Saviour; an unholy Church is the only thing that can hinder the triumph of Christ. Therefore, having heard of their faith, he prays that God, the Father of glory, may give unto them the spirit of wisdom, that they may know *what they have got in Jesus*, and *what Jesus has got in them.*

So, then, this is evident—that we may have found in the Lord Jesus Christ "the Gospel of our salvation," that we may have been "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," and yet we may not

"know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;" or, in other words, *What we have got in Jesus*, and *what Jesus has got in us*. This knowledge it is which is revealed to us by the gift of Pentecost. We may be true disciples and followers of Christ, and yet we may see in Jesus only what *we want to see*, and may never see at all what Jesus has in us. How this is made known to us in the Pentecostal gift is gloriously illustrated in the story of the disciples of old.

Let us begin this wonderful contrast at the incident recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, where Jesus gathers His disciples about Him in the quiet region of Cæsarea Philippi.

He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

Well worth thinking of is that reply. This is the natural estimate of the Lord Jesus Christ—

the world's opinion of Him. Men set Him as high as man had ever got—on a level with the greatest.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I, the Son of Man, am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Not only alongside of the highest does Peter's faith set Him, but higher than the highest could ever get; great not by attainment, but by *origin—the Son of the living God.*

In reply the Lord Jesus tells Peter that it was not because of any special advantages that he had come to know this truth; not because he had seen what others had not seen, nor because he had heard what others did not know,—he had no eye, no ear by which this could ever have been learned. *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father Which is in Heaven.* So, then, here is a revelation of Jesus made to Peter by the Holy Spirit of God. I SAY UNTO THEE, THOU ART PETER, AND UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH;

AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT. What the words meant it is not needful for us just now to consider; we are concerned with the meaning which the disciples would attach to the words. The Jew knew the Church only as the kingdom, and the kingdom only as the Church. Here, then, was that for which they so greatly longed—definite and assured; here was the promise of the triumph of Israel over the Roman power and other foes. This is what they wanted and longed to see. AND I WILL GIVE UNTO THEE THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. The keys were the symbol of authority. All that Joseph was in the house of Pharaoh, Peter was going to be in the Royal House of Christ the Lord. Now surely Peter's joy was full.

FROM THAT TIME FORTH BEGAN JESUS TO SHEW UNTO HIS DISCIPLES, HOW THAT HE MUST GO UNTO JERUSALEM, AND SUFFER MANY THINGS OF THE ELDERS, AND CHIEF PRIESTS, AND SCRIBES, AND BE KILLED. As He bends over them that face grows saddened, and He seems to say:

"Come nearer to Me, My children. I want you to see what you have got in Me, and what I have got in you. I am come to suffer and to die. And now I want your tenderest love and sympathy and trust. I want you to comfort and help Me with your heart's devotion. I am going to be killed."

Then Peter took Him—took hold of Him—*and said, This be far from Thee, Lord;* or, as it is in the margin, *Pity Thyself—this shall not be unto Thee.*

And Jesus flung from His shoulder the too familiar touch, and said, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* Peter was doing the devil's work. What is that? It is one thing only—*to make us think about ourselves.* Look at the first temptation, when the devil came to our first parents, and with tones of indignant surprise, began to inquire: "So *you* are forbidden to eat of all the trees of the gardens—such lofty and noble and sublime creatures as you! Ah, this is too bad. Think what belongs to you—the very top and crown of all things—you shall be as gods!"

Look at it in the case of the Lord Jesus: "If *Thou* be the Son of God—think of Thy right, Thy dignity, Thy high position, and Thy power—command that these stones be made bread." It is the devil's work still—*think of thyself.* He cares little what we think of ourselves if we only keep on thinking it. Great saint or great sinner, it is all one if the eyes be but set upon self. And mark well the one work of the Holy Spirit: to stay our thoughts upon God, to glorify Jesus, to set Him before us, to reveal the love of God until our hearts cry *Abba, Father.* The one effort and life-work of Jesus was to stay His mind upon the will of the Father—"My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me." So then Peter was doing the devil's work. "Think of Thyself. This be far from *Thee*—this shall not be unto Thee!"

What follows? The beginning of the saddest chapter that ever was written in all the history of the Church,—the beginning of the dark sorrows of Jesus, not in the world, nor from His foes, but

amongst His disciples. From that moment again and again we find Jesus alone. His thoughts are not their thoughts. They are eager for the temporal kingdom. He is conscious, day by day, of the shadow of the Cross, ever nearer and darker.

There is a whole week of silence. It is as if time stood still. No word is spoken—no thing is done. Oh, that awful silence, in which no single word is recorded by the evangelists. How could there be anything to record? They would not hear of Christ's great sorrow, and so Christ could not have their love and sympathy.

A week of silence, and in His lonely grief the dreadful end shaping itself more vividly before Him, until we can think that, unless some relief shall come, He must die. Three times in the life of the Lord Jesus it would seem that He—in all points like as we are—must have perished if help had not come from Heaven. Once of bodily hunger, when earth had no hand to stretch out to the Lord of her harvests, and the angels came and ministered to Him. Once of heart-grief, when it

would seem as if that heart must have broken as it brake on the Cross, and there appeared an angel from Heaven, strengthening Him. This was the third time, when we can think that the human mind, burdened and crushed beneath such thoughts, must be overthrown unless He can find the relief which utterance and sympathy can bring. But, alas! even amongst His own disciples there is no ear, there is no heart! Then Christ goes up the Mount of Transfiguration. The angels could not help Him now. They could bring Him bread; they could afford Him strength; but of the mystery of the Cross they could not speak. To them it was sealed, they *desiring* to look into these things.

AND THERE APPEARED MOSES AND ELIAS, TALKING WITH HIM OF THE DECEASE THAT HE SHOULD ACCOMPLISH AT JERUSALEM. Thank God that He had the two great saints of old waiting for that dreadful hour, that they with human sympathy could bring the Redeemer the relief which His own disciples withheld.

Look at it. Linger over it until it lives before

the mind. Is it not the picture of the Church to-day? We want the Christ that makes us happy—the Christ that is going to take us to Heaven and make us Kings and Priests to God, white-robed and golden-crowned. But in our midst to-day there is a lonely Christ, carrying the sorrows of our poor world. He knows every perishing child; every outcast woman; every wretched drunkard and thief; every sad heart amidst the glitter of society. And He comes to us to seek for these our love, our sympathy, our service, that in us these may find His help. No—we do not want to know about these dreadful things. We want a nice, comfortable religion, which makes us forget all sorrow and wretchedness. Alas! the eyes of the heart are not opened. We cannot see what we have got in Jesus, and so we cannot see what Jesus has got in us. In Christ Himself, indeed, we see not Him so much as ourselves,—we see only what we want to see.

The story grows sadder at every step of it. Henceforth Jesus is alone; they will not hear,

therefore they cannot help. Turn to the Gospel according to St. Mark, the ninth chapter and thirty-first verse. They have come down from the Mount, and are passing through Galilee. *And He taught His disciples,*—as if He said it over and over again, and put it in many ways—*The Son of Man is delivered into the* HANDS OF MEN, AND THEY SHALL KILL HIM.

We see again that Face so sorrowful, so full of entreaty; and again He gathers His followers about Himself, yearning for their trust and love. But they stood and stared with a heartless wonder, wishing that He would not talk of such dreadful things. They understood not the saying and feared to ask Him—lest they should understand.

And when they were come into the house He asked them, What was it that ye disputed by the way? He had walked alone, or He would have known what they talked about. And there fell upon them all a silence and a shame. FOR BY THE WAY THEY HAD DISPUTED AMONG THEMSELVES WHO SHOULD BE THE GREATEST. Think

of it. Jesus alone, burdened with dreadful thoughts of His own shame and agony and death: and on the breeze there came the noisy wrangling of His disciples as to which of them should be the first! Alas, it is the picture still. The Christ alone, burdened with the sins and sorrows of the poor world: and we behind Him, every man eager for his own little gain, his own little position and dignity. Alas! who shall not pity Him?

Turn to the tenth chapter of St. Mark, the twenty-eighth verse. *Then Peter began to say unto Him, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee.* How foolish are we whenever we begin to boast, and how blind! This was the man who was hoping to be Prime Minister and Lord of the Treasury; and this was he who was contending as to who should be greatest! Then beside this boast came words that are to be read very slowly, tarrying to let the vision rise before us. The Figure of the Lord as He strides up the hillside, as if He had girt Himself for some desperate

purpose. The Face so white, so deeply lined with its sorrow. *They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them,*—alone again, ever alone. *And as they followed they were afraid.* Then He stops and leans, as we can think, against the rugged trunk of some tree, and rests underneath the shade of its kindly branches. And as the wondering disciples gather about Him, surely it is with tearful eyes and lips that quiver in His grief that He begins to tell them what things should happen to Him—that the Son of Man was to be delivered unto the chief priests, and they should condemn Him to death, and should deliver Him to the Gentiles. With what terrible vividness does it all stand out before Him as He speaks! And He goes on to tell them how that the heathen should mock Him, and should spit upon Him, and should scourge Him, and should kill Him. *Then*—interrupting Him in the very midst of these words—came one desiring to speak with Him. The wretched wrangle has spread from the disciples to their family; and now comes the mother of James

and John. Why indeed should Peter be first? He is not in the family. Geikie suggests that he was in an inferior position to the sons of Zebedee. It would seem, too, that there was a close relationship between Jesus and these two. So emboldened the mother comes with her request—Grant that my two sons may be first and greatest in the kingdom which Thou art going to establish!

So here again is the faith in Christ—believing in Him, following Him, yielding Him its homage—yet the eyes of the heart are not opened, and therefore they see neither what they have in Him nor what He has in them. So goes the burdened Christ—alone—whilst His disciples are eager every one for his own position and greatness. So to-day the Christ is honoured, adored, believed in, followed, but they who follow are seeking each his own happiness here and Heaven hereafter. And the great Brother of all men, the Helper of the needy, and the Healer of earth's ills, can find no ear, no sympathy, no service, as He goes on His way.

But still sadder grows the story. Turn to the Gospel according to St. Luke, the twenty-second chapter and nineteenth verse. The Master is sitting at the Last Supper. This very night begins that awful ending of it all. And now He rises, and taking bread He BRAKE IT. Again let us see it, see it with the eyes of the heart. The hands that take the bread and break it. Think how, in the act, the Lord passed through all the agony of the Cross. TAKE EAT: THIS IS MY BODY WHICH IS GIVEN FOR YOU. And so for each the torn and broken bread. Then after supper He took the cup. How near, how vivid, how real to Him were all the sufferings of that dreadful death as He spake the words—MY BLOOD WHICH IS SHED FOR YOU!

Then—there—right under the very shadow of the Cross *there was also a strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest!*

Alas, it is our story, mine and yours. How often in the very presence of Christ have we been

eager for our own importance, seeking *through Him* to further our little ambitions, so blind to His grief and so keen-eyed for ourselves, so dull to understand His will, so sensitive to all that stirred our jealousy or pride! Let us sink down in bitter shame at His feet. Is it always to be thus? Christ bearing the sins and sorrows of the world, and we going on in this dreadful selfishness. Is there any remedy? If it is to be found shall we not solemnly resolve to find it? And if it is to be had do we not pledge ourselves that for our dear Master's sake it shall be ours?

The day of Pentecost is fully come. The promised gift is given. Upon them has come the Holy Ghost, and now they are witnesses unto Him. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, has given unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation; and now the eyes of the heart are opened, and they see what they have in Jesus and what Jesus has in them.

Perhaps for the very first time Peter ventures

to speak that dreadful word *crucified.* With what confidence he rings it forth! What a rapturous triumph it kindles! What a tone of authority he catches as he thinks of it! YE MEN OF ISRAEL, HEAR THESE WORDS; JESUS OF NAZARETH . . . WHOM YE HAVE TAKEN, AND BY WICKED HANDS HAVE CRUCIFIED AND SLAIN: HIM HATH GOD RAISED UP. What a victory was this—not only over rulers and chief priests and Roman soldiers, but over death and all the Powers of darkness! What a Christ is this! exalted far above the throne of David, to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high, until His foes be made His footstool. No more the poor earthy thought of a Christ who was come to indulge the selfish ambition of a disciple. Peter triumphed in a Prince and a Saviour Who was exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.

And what Jesus has got in them. "And they continuing with *one accord.*" One accord — all strife and wrangling dead. In that pure atmosphere envy and jealousy can find no place,—"did

eat their meat with gladness *and singleness of heart;*" as if one great brotherly spirit dwelt within them. *They had all things common*—how complete and perfect the transformation. *They sold their possessions, and parted them as every man had need.*

The glorious change fills every page, gleaming, flashing everywhere.

Peter and John went up together. Together—that is a new thing. Were they not the rival claimants, of all opponents first and strongest? But now there is no separating them. Here is some acquaintance of Peter's who stops him for a moment. "Excuse me, Peter, but a little time since, when I met you, things were looking very bright. You expected to come into a position of vast influence and wealth—Prime Minister, Keeper of the Keys in the House of David. May I ask after your position? I see you have come into a fortune, you look so happy."

"*Silver and gold have I none,*" cries Peter, but without a hint of disappointment or regret. He

does not seem to think about it for a moment. *See what Jesus has got in Peter*—one who cannot pass a beggar without pity and a great longing to help him. *And see what Peter has got in Jesus Christ*—not One Who is going to make him rich and happy and great, but One Who through him can bend over a lame man and lift him up and set him on his feet!

And Peter took him by the right hand—took the beggar! Really, Peter, Saint Peter, great Apostle and Bishop, trusted with such awful authority, first of a line of wondrous successors of lords spiritual and temporal, who in their splendid pomp shall claim to be the keeper of thy keys, be not so forgetful of thy dignity and high position as to go taking beggars by the hand! Ah, Peter has forgotten all about himself. The love, the pity, the mighty helpfulness of Jesus Christ fill all his soul. *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.* And as Peter watches the man going leaping and praising God, he knows more joy and blessedness

than ever came to Prime Minister or Lord of the Treasury.

Follow the story. Things get worse and worse with Peter. Poor Peter! how disappointed he must be! The last time we saw him he had neither silver nor gold, and now they have taken him off to prison, and to-morrow he is to be brought before the judges. On, follow them as they go to their own company, and join in that praise meeting. What a might as of omnipotence these men find in the very name of Jesus! What a defiance of triumph! what a great untroubled rest is theirs as they sing of Him, and of the signs and wonders that shall be wrought in the name of the Holy Child Jesus!

Worse yet. Poverty was bad; prison was worse. But now here come the Apostles—beaten, bruised, *bleeding!*—their dreams of greatness have had a rude awakening. What now of their strifes and ambitions? *Beaten!* what indignity and shame is this! But follow them.

AND THEY DEPARTED FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL, REJOICING THAT THEY WERE COUNTED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME.

What think you of a Christianity like this? It is ours—yours and mine—if we will have it. Does it not kindle our longing, and do not our hearts cry out for so complete a surrender of ourselves to Christ? Claim the promise, for it is yours. *Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me.*

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

The Power come—The Disciples amongst the Romans

THE day of Pentecost is fully come. The disciples are filled with the Holy Ghost, and now they all go forth to be witnesses unto Christ. Do not for a moment think of them all as preachers, and not even of all as doing any distinct and definite work in the Church. But all alike go forth to be *witnesses unto Him*—to live over again the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this, above everything else, is the power given. They might preach, but the preaching was an empty word without the Christ-

like life. The world was to be won, not by theories, creeds, methods, but by Christlike living. Men and women were to go in and out amongst their neighbours, doing their daily work, giving their evidence for Jesus by *living Him*, their lives examined and cross-examined, but their testimony holding good. Whatever difference could it make to anybody that any man should *say* that Christ was the Son of God, and that He rose from the dead, and that He had sent them out in His Name to claim the world for Him? The world might well laugh them to scorn — *What do these feeble Jews?* But when each of them went out to live a Christlike life it made a vast difference to everybody—a life of truth, of purity, of self-forgetfulness, of helping everybody, of loving everybody; a life loosed from the pleasure and pride of the world, from the tyranny of its maxims and spirit; a life lifted up from the littleness of the seen and the narrowness of the present, laid out in relation to the eternal and the infinite—men could not help feel-

ing *that*, and believing in it. Very likely they hated the light that condemned them, and the goodness that shamed them, but they could not be indifferent to it. Their very persecution was aimed against its power; it was the acknowledgment: "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." Better, a thousand times better, a persecuted Christianity than a religion which is too weak or too worldly to make anybody feel uncomfortable. Christianity is Christ-likeness—*that or nothing.*

So, then, the little company, carrying its sacred trust, goes forth into the midst of the great world —simple goodness against the combined forces of the earth. Which shall win? Shame, indeed, to any with whom the answer is a doubtful one! The answer is triumphantly assured—*That shall win which has God on its side.* Would to God that His people only believed it!

Let us follow them as they come into contact with the Roman, stern, haughty, commanding—a nation that worshipped authority, whose system

of military organisation was more complete than anything the world has seen, before or since. At the very dawn of Christ's day we see this power of goodness face to face with the might of Rome. In his strong fortress, amidst his lords and chief captains and his men of war, is the proud Herod, representative of Rome. And before him comes the last of Jewish prophets, the first of Christian preachers—John the Baptist, friendless, helpless, not knowing how long he may call his head his own. Could any contrast be greater—Herod, in his royal apparel, with power of life and death upon his lips, and this pale-faced prisoner, his home the dungeon, the fetters on his wrists? But as John speaks a few plain, strong words, Herod cringed; the soul sank within him, and amidst his men of valour, with Rome at his back, he felt that all his forces and all Cæsar's legions were no match for this prisoner. *Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy.*

Look at it again in the Person of the Blessed Lord Jesus before Pontius Pilate, the Roman

Governor. Oh, never was one so helpless as was He at that hour. Wasted and wearied, see Him as He is grasped by the rough soldiers; beaten, bound, forsaken, with all the marks of His foul dishonour about Him; they have plucked the hair of His cheek, they have scourged Him and spat upon Him and buffeted Him. On every side of Him is the surging mob. Now Pilate comes, scornful of these Jews and their superstitions. With a tone of derision he asks, "What accusation bring *ye*—the proud rulers and priests of Jerusalem —against *this Man?*" And yet in this Man there is something that strangely moves Pilate—a dignity, a depth of pity, the patience as of a God. He has heard the charge against Him, and now beckons the soldiers to bring Him within the hall. And there Pilate looks into that face, so infinitely sad, and yet so unearthly in its majesty and love. "Art Thou a King?" he asks—a question that could only be put to such an one in derision or in awe. It is with awe that Pilate goes forth and cries to the accusers, "I find no fault in Him."

And later we read: *Then was Pilate the more* AFRAID. *Afraid!* So friendless, so powerless, so completely in thy hands, Pilate, surely thou dost not fear Him! *Then was Pilate the more afraid when he heard that He made Himself the Son of God.* The might of that simple goodness was more than a match for all Rome, and the Galilean conquered. And one can think that it was with the confession of his heart that Pilate wrote: *This* IS *the King of the Jews.*

Look at it again, as Paul stands before the cruel Nero—Paul the aged, Paul who writes that none stood by him. What of the threats of the Emperor—"I will cut off thine head"? Think how Paul's face lights up with gladness, and looking heavenwards he cries: "*Henceforth there is laid up for* ME *a crown that the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day!*" What could they do with such a man? To kill him was only to ensure his coronation. The arm of Rome was paralysed—she had no hand that could injure him. This was the power that smote Rome

—the conquering power of simple goodness, the goodness of God, of Christ, lived out in the power of the Holy Ghost by plain men and women.

This is the want of to-day as of all time. Give us this goodness, and the victory is assured. Nothing else will avail us anything. We have a foe to fight in England to-day mightier than ever was Rome of old. What is the great power of England, the god of this country, enthroned and crowned, and served with an intenser and keener and more exacting service than ever galley-slave or soldier rendered to the Emperor of old? *Gold, the thirst for it*—cruel and terrible sometimes as the thirst of hell; *the means of making it*, often knowing no law but success, that sanctifies everything; *the ways of spending it or not spending it*—these three are the sources of the ills that curse us. And all this Christianity scarcely touches. How is it? Its voice is scarcely lifted against this haste to be rich, to get on in the world no matter who is driven to the wall. Has Christianity a message? —has it any remedy for this state of things—this

growing poverty of the poor, this growing wealth of the wealthy, and between them a gulf ever deeper and broader, with its awful squalor and wretchedness on one side, and its splendid luxury on the other? Is the Christianity of Christ, which was able to conquer the Cæsars, able to meet these evils? If it cannot, then let the whole thing go—it is dead, bury it. If it can, then in the name of our God, let it be used, for there is terrible need. Does somebody object that such Christianity is revolutionary; that it is setting the masses against the classes; that it is Socialism? Well let us ask ourselves the plain truth about these dreadful words. Is Christianity a conflict with evil *only* amongst the poor, the weak, those who have little choice between vice and starvation? but if evil be rich, and wears a crown and sits on a throne, is Christianity to bow down before it, and call it law and order? Let no man pretend that the Christianity of Jesus Christ is *that.* His Christianity is in conflict with *evil everywhere.* Within a week of Pentecost the leaders of Christianity were in

prison, and refused to give any promise to the authorities that they would recognise any law which was contrary to the commandment of God. Paul and Silas did not scruple to interfere very seriously with some rich men's gains, and got beaten for it and sent to prison, and they praised God when they got there.

Men seem utterly to forget the warnings of God against this feverish rush and haste to be rich. If thought of at all, they are considered to be the wild and somewhat mistaken words of men in an age when they "did not understand business." It is almost impossible for the Gospel voice to make itself heard in this matter, amidst the din and hubbub of life. There are astronomical observations which, I believe, cannot be taken in this country: there is too much vibration, and the skies are too stained with smoke. Alas! there are heavenly signs and warnings and entreaties which the Church fails to hear,—is too busy, perhaps too greedy. There is the gospel of *contentment*, the Gospel which Christ preached in His

first sermon, and in the whole sermon of His life. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon;* therefore, let the anxiety for Mammon go that ye may serve God. Who of the hurried, anxious, eager ones that fill our streets and market-places really believes that? How utterly lost and dead, trampled under foot on the hard pavements of our cities, are such sweet messages as these which God hath sent to us!—*Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee* (Heb. xiii. 5, R. V.). Never did words more terribly true come from any lips than those which follow a similar message from St. Paul, as if the Apostle felt how lightly men, greedy for gain, would brush aside the milder utterance! *Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* That is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the very teeth of the man-made gospel of this nineteenth century—the

gospel of push, of getting on in the world. Then from this clear sky comes the thunderbolt, as if there were no choice between this Divine contentment and this peril: *They that* WILL *be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils: which some reaching after have erred from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things.*

Reader, put it to thine own heart: Is God and His service more than the world? Is the uncertain gain, which I must leave behind me, more than the abiding character which I must take with me for ever? Is Christ the King more than Mammon? Is not anything better than the feverish unrest and disquiet and burden of care, if only it gives us opportunity and desire for communion with God, and growth in likeness to Him? Is there not a great peril in the multiplying of earthly comforts, in the pride of growing import-

ance, and in the earthly security and independence which come with wealth?

For this the power of the Holy Ghost is given —to cast out the devil of covetousness and love of money, and to bring into the life a gracious contentment. Was there ever more need to seek that power, and to wait upon God until it is given? The promise is yours. *What will you do with it?*

This gospel of contentment would go very far to remedy the second great evil—*The methods of making money.* The Christianity of Jesus Christ is a power in the midst of us to cast out of business the keen, hard, advantage-taking spirit that finds its opportunity in other men's difficulties. "If I did not, somebody else would." Very well, let somebody else do it; but, for Christ's sake, you dare not do what is unbrotherly. What others do is surely no law to a man who calls Jesus Christ his Lord and Master. We have no business to trust Him as our Saviour if we do not follow Him as our Example in every path of our life. The re-

ligion of Jesus Christ forbids utterly the underhandedness or misrepresentation that the world calls clever. It forbids the many words of bargaining, the under-colouring and over-colouring to suit one's own convenience; it denounces utterly the whole system of bribes and thefts which are not called by those names,—"*commission*" is the word, is it not? Now, it is sheer and utter folly—it is worse, it is a miserable and dreadful hypocrisy—for any who do these things to profess and call themselves Christians. Christ never knew such Christians, and will not own them.

Some years ago, I heard of a man who occupied a position of great responsibility and influence as manager of one of the largest companies in England—as sturdy a bit of honesty as ever God made. A merchant called upon him one day, anxious to sell some steel, and quietly set down before him a roll of notes amounting to £500. "What are these?" asked the manager, taking them up. "Oh!" explained the merchant, in an undertone, "if you will be good enough to accept them with

the compliments of the firm." Then it flashed upon the good man that it was a bribe. Crumpling the notes together as so much waste paper, he flung them out of the office door, and said indignantly: "Sir, if you are not gone after them in one minute I will kick you there!"

That is the Christianity for the nineteenth century—that resoluteness in the soul, in the hand, aye, and in the foot too, if need be! The Christianity of Jesus Christ a power stronger than the power of money.

What is the good of all our churches and chapels, our sermons and services, our preachings and prayings, if we cannot find in them all a power that can make *honest men?* What is the Gospel of Jesus Christ for if it is not a power to make men keep their hands clean, to make men speak the truth exactly, whether it pays or whether it does not pay? If we cannot find in Christianity a power that can secure that, then let us have done with it. Turn the churches and chapels into lunatic asylums, or to some other purpose, and

send all ministers at least to earn an honest living. The Christianity of Jesus Christ is a power to make men honest, true, upright, and to keep them so, or it is nothing, and worse than nothing.

Does somebody suggest that you cannot do business on those principles? So it has been said. Very well, if that be so, what then? There was a time when men could not be Christians and live; so they were Christians still—*and died.* If it come to that stern necessity there is no good reason why we should not go and do likewise. At least *be one thing or the other.* If the world be what you want supremely, choose it, and make the most of it, but do not call yourself a Christian. If Christ be King, and you profess to be His servant and soldier, then be true to Him. No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God *and* Mammon.

Christ *is* the King. He *must* reign. Will you bow before Him now, reader? Will you, in His strength, gird yourself afresh for His service?

kneel at His feet, and pledge yourself to be true and faithful to Him, His brave soldier at all times and in all places, and in all companies and amidst all perils, carrying uninjured this awful trust—*the glory of the Lord?*

CHAPTER THE NINTH

The Disciples amongst the Greeks

LET us follow the disciples again—these men and women filled with the Holy Ghost and going forth to be witnesses to Christ. We have seen them coming into contact with Rome, in the might of their goodness subduing the force of her legions. Now let us follow the effect of the Christlike life amongst the Greeks. Once more let us guard against thinking of these early disciples as preachers. Our notion of them is apt to be shaped by the recollection of St. Peter in Jerusalem, or St. Paul on Mars Hill, or Apollos. The mass of the dis-

ciples then, like the mass of Christ's disciples to-day, were simple men and women, for the most part of the humblest position, many of them probably slaves.

Now what can these do amongst a people like the Greeks—a nation of philosophers, intellectual, of most fastidious taste, looking with the utmost contempt upon the uncultured and ignorant? What chance had a handful of despised Christians of influencing such a people? It seems a more hopeless task than their work amongst the Romans, for their rough strength would more easily be wrought upon by gentleness and love than these refined Greeks would be influenced by those whom they so ridiculed and despised. If ever intellectual power seemed a necessity it was here. Many a lowly follower of Christ must have sighed, "Oh that God would send us some genius that should confound the reasonings and overthrow the philosophies of these mighty men, and show that Jesus is indeed the Christ! Would God that I were clever!" And the lowly one sighed again to think

how little good he could do! It was all right. The only power needed was the power given—power to live over again the Christlike life,—that was the supreme argument. "But this Christian disciple is a slave—of all most ignorant, one whose opinion nobody would ever consider worth hearing. Have you any hope of men in his position transforming the customs and systems of these cultured and elegant Greeks?" So I can think of some early Mr. Fearing talking of their needs. "Nothing will be done here without orators; men of splendid gifts and genius, they are needed for this work." Does not He who ascended up on high, and received gifts for men, know the gifts that are required? Alas! that we are so much more ready to suggest than to receive.

Let us stay awhile here amidst those who are waited on by this Christian slave. Here is the master of the house—a doctor in philosophy. With massive head and brows knit in earnest thought he dreams his dream. "I can think," he mutters to himself, "if there should come from

some other world—if indeed there be another world" (for the sign of a true philosophy is that same *if*; to be *sure* of anything is unphilosophical) —"one of the Gods—if Gods there be,—in the likeness of us men—if indeed there be any men; —I can think that, should such an one gather about him a company of disciples, and then, for the sake of the truth he taught, should lay down his life, that the memory of such a leader, treasured and obeyed, might perhaps come to inspire a purely unselfish life." And as he dreams his dream, his slave is busied about a thousand things in the house, moving ever to and fro, in his gladness singing some song of his Redeemer. Some day the philosopher wakes up and rubs his eyes and watches, as one whose suspicion is aroused. He tests this slave, and watches more narrowly, and from every test he comes triumphantly. The master can resist it no longer. "He has got it," he cries; "this slave of mine is living the life. He tells of One Who has indeed come down in the likeness of men, and Who has laid down His

life for the truth He taught; and he claims that not the memory only, but the very Presence and Power of this same Crucified One controls his whole life, and shapes his every wish and word and act." Ah, poor slave, give thanks to God. No orator, no philosopher, could do so much—no genius could do so well. Amidst the splendid visions of these men, the unselfish dreams and the selfish lives, here was a bit of actual flesh and blood translating the vision into everyday life. *That is Christianity*—earth's sublimest aspirations, most splendid visions, loveliest dreams, *embodied and lived*, yet without any least consciousness of sublimity or loveliness. The Christlike life is the only power that can subdue the world.

Recall, again, *the restlessness of the nation*—the uncertainty about everything. And here and there was a man, a woman, whose life seemed all sunshine, peace, repose. A people so full of perception could not fail to detect it in the look, the tone, the manner—everything. And the only explanation was that these knew of One Whom

they called Father, Whose faithfulness was as a rock upon which they built for eternity, Whose love compassed them as Heaven compassed earth.

And their lives were blest and bright with hopes which, like the flowers, had their roots in the earth, but that stretched up into the sunshine and favour of God. How little beside such a possession was the dim guess of the Greek philosophy!

Think of the nation, again, in its *search for happiness*—toiling for rest, lavishing money upon pleasures that ceased to please, and greedy for luxuries that only burdened them the more. Amidst the sculptured marbles, and splash of fountain, and the charms of exquisite beauty, here leans the fair Greek. And from the terrace below there comes the voice of the slave telling of one who wrote from his prison, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

And some day, half-scornfully, and yet with whole-hearted longing, the Grecian lady asks, "Tell me, what is this silly nonsense that you

have in your head that you call your religion?" O happy disciple, with such an opportunity! As the eye flashes, and the face lights up, the heart pours forth its story of God's love and of the Blessed Christ: that we are not the sport of lawless chance, but that we are guided by Infinite Wisdom, we are led by His Hand; that all life is not a vexation, a weariness, a fear, but an education, a development, a gracious unfolding—like the unfolding of the lily at the touch of the light and warmth; that God has one great purpose running through all things, shaping them—through pleasure and through pain, through loss and gain, through health and sickness and through death,—that we be conformed to the image of the Altogether Lovely, and that all within us be made beautiful as God.

Here verily was a philosophy not dreamed of only, but *possessed;* not argued about, but lived. And it was the power of that life of rest, of sweet unselfishness, of trustful happiness, that won the Greek for Christ. Alas! that any should go sigh-

ing for thoughts and words to tell of it when they can have that very life itself, and be like Christ.

We live to-day in a very revival of the Greek spirit. Art, philosophy, music, culture, have asserted their power as never before. We are conscious of it everywhere—in our buildings, in the very shapes of things, in the restless scepticism of the age. The pulpit, the press, the whole literature of the land testify to its sway. And there are the same characteristics in the people as in the Greeks of old—the restlessness, the intellectualism, the craving for excitement, the weariness and the scepticism. How are we going to meet it? There is but one thing needful—that *those who are called Christians will set themselves for Christ's sake to live the Christlike life*, striving to let men see in everything the truth and purity and courageous goodness of Jesus Christ — His graciousness and lowliness; His patience, and yet His indignation, too, against all evil; striving to bring into the world the hope for all men, and the help for all which comes

from faith in God and His self-sacrifice. We have no right to sigh and think how difficult it is to live such a life. If Christ offers us the power, where is the difficulty, except only that we do not accept it? This Christlike life alone is Christianity. Do not let us think of it as anything less or anything else; and it is power for such a life that is provided for each of us.

This alone will suffice. Books on the evidences of Christianity may interest as arguments; may even silence some objections, unless they provoke further controversy. The power of the Holy Ghost is not an intellectual power to prove the abstract truth of Christianity; it is a power to let men see and feel the living Christ. There is only one work on the Evidences of Christianity that wholly satisfies any one—a work which defies the most ingenious criticism and the most skilful logic. It is said to be scarce, if not indeed very scarce, but we have met with it here and there. It is from five to six feet of humanity living a Christlike life.

What is it that keeps religion alive in our land to-day? What is it that creates and sustains faith in God and in the unseen, and in the reality of a Power that can make men what they should be? It is the Christlike life. In the school some one boy setting himself to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. In the office, or the workshop, or the home, one resolutely following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. In the market, one whose word is ever true, whose dealing is ever honourable, whose integrity and uprightness never fail under any strain. These are the props and pillars of Christ's religion in our land to-day. Intellectual power, social position, money, these do count for very little. Here is a man occupying a high position in society, refined, keeping himself abreast of the thinking of the age. He has finished reading some article either for or against Christianity; has been somewhat interested in the argument, and now puts down the book probably to forget all about it. And now he rides in to church, for it is Sunday morning. He has heard

scores of sermons, but probably cannot recall one of them. And now as he rides through the village street, here is old Hodge. I know him well, poor old fellow, bent and dried up in the winds and sunshine of seventy years' hard toil.

"Good-morning, Hodge," says the Squire reining in his horse.

The old man lifts the trembling hand to the rim of his battered hat. "Good-morning, your honour, good-morning," and the face beams with gladness.

As the Squire rides slowly away, listen, for it is worth hearing. "Poor old Hodge! if ever there was a good man under the sun that is old Hodge. I would give half my acres if only I had got in my heart what he has got in his."

Look at him again, poor old Hodge! *Intellectual power?*—No, he does not know his A, B, C. *Money?*—His income is two shillings and sixpence a week, and a loaf of bread. *Social position?*—Next Saturday he is going into the workhouse.

Oh, is it not a glorious thing that this holy religion of Jesus Christ is a thing so sublimely indifferent to all these earthy considerations! Give her goodness, goodness only, unfailing Christlike goodness, and her victory is assured. Nobody stops to ask what denomination that belongs to, or what distinctive creed it may hold. The heart cries out, "*That* is what I believe in, and that is what I want to be." Whatever else men do believe in or do not, everybody believes in goodness. That needs no wordy war to claim its right and title; no herald need announce its coming; no pomp of circumstance can help to gain it room. Like the sun, its voice is not heard; it is enough that it shines.

CHAPTER THE TENTH

The Disciples amongst the Poor

ONCE more let us follow these men and women filled with the Holy Ghost as they go amongst the poor, the outcast and enslaved. There were plenty of these in the days of the early Christians. These great masses of the poor and destitute are not the creation of modern life. It is said that Cæsar found scarcely less than three-quarters of the citizens of Rome dependent on public succour—the peril and perplexity of the city.

It is the question that every Christian should ask himself—*Has Christianity any message, any*

remedy for the social ills of our time? If it have such a message, what is it? There is a perilous seething and ferment in our midst. It is as if our great cities were built over slumbering volcanoes, and ominous disturbances now and then remind us that the internal fires may easily break forth and overwhelm us. And yet the Christianity of to-day seems for the most part to go on its way wrapt in its self-complacency, and not greatly concerned about any thing beyond trying to make its fortune, and then to find its own way to Heaven. Verestchagin, the Russian painter, soldier, and traveller, whose pictures have lately made a sensation in London, and whose observation and experience give weight to his words, makes this statement in his Autobiography: "We shall search in vain for Christian states or communities where the precepts of Christ are really carried out. In this respect the impression which is produced upon me by England—which stands at the head of the civilised world, which assuredly owes a great deal to Christianity, but is hampered with

a narrow official conception of Christ's teaching—is a somewhat gloomy one. *Who does not know the deep contempt for poverty which reigns in England, though poverty is placed by the Gospel so high above wealth?"*

And if he had an opportunity of seeing it, as many have, would he not add that the scorn is well repaid—as scorn is likely to be—by the curse of the poor, a curse none the less deep or bitter because it has so little opportunity of making itself heard?

What, then, of the early Christians filled with the Holy Ghost in relation to the poor?

Well, they did not wait until they had some particular remedy, defined and approved, for this particular ill. They did not go forth proclaiming any patent political cure—socialism, communism, much less was there any hint of violence. Most of them did not proclaim anything at all. They never dreamed that they were going to introduce a revolution. It seemed of all things the most unlikely,—revolutions are begotten of firebrands,

riot, bloodshed, tears. They had two things—the only two things that Christianity requires—they had the example of Jesus Christ, and they had power to follow in His steps. And that wrought the revolution, just as when God turns the dead world of winter into the beauty of the spring, by the warmth of a new life, a life of love.

Well has it been said: "Socialism's creed is this—*All thine is mine;* Christianity's creed is this—*All mine is thine.*" But the Christian's creed is of all mockeries the dreariest *unless it is lived.* Irritating, aggravating, sickening are such sentiments when they are but pious utterances only and not grand realities. And they of old went forth as their Master did—*to live it.*

Let us, too, carefully look at the example and teaching of Jesus Christ in relation to the poor.

By His very coming Christ made poverty no more a degradation. Of all men who ever lived Jesus Christ alone had any choice in the circumstances of His birth, and He chose the poorest lot and the hardest fare that ever befell any man.

Henceforth poverty was no part of Divine disfavour. He Who became poor was the well-beloved Son in Whom the Father was ever well pleased. What wicked folly we utter when we talk as if the "providential path" was always one where men make their fortunes, and as if we could measure God's goodness by the income!

Jesus Christ took away the reproach of poverty. No more should any follower of Christ think poverty is dull, ignorant, unconscious and incapable of any higher development, shut out from wisdom and grace and the sublimer aspect of things. But, alas, the great Example does not affect men's estimate of poverty to-day. The dull money-grubber of whom Tennyson tells utters many a man's feeling towards the poor:—

"Tis'n them as 'as munny as breäks into 'ouses an' steäls,
Them as 'as coäts to their backs, an' taäkes their regular meäls.
Noä, but it's them as niver knaws wheer a meäl's to be 'ad.
Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

Them or thir feythers, tha sees, mun 'a beän a laäzy lot,
Fur work mun 'a gone to the gittin' whiniver munny was got."

Jesus Christ lowered the greatness of wealth by passing it by, and uplifted and hallowed the life of poverty by deliberately accepting it.

But more than this—much more. *The one supreme idea which Jesus Christ lived out to the full was this—a true Brotherliness.* For the first time in all the ages Jesus Christ brought into the world a *reverence for humanity.* Everything in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ lights up His brotherly kindness. His deeds, His words, His manner, His look, His death all grew out of it; His gracious familiarity, His simplicity, His perfect approachableness and homeliness all proclaimed it. If so varied and many-sided a life can be put into a single word this is the summary of its earthward aspect—*it was perfected Brotherly-kindness.* This inspired His teaching and His actions, and His fiercest indignation was kindled by all that made light of this great law

of love. His parables, alike in their sweetest tenderness and in their most lurid terror, set it forth again and again. His revelation of the Father established a new relationship amongst men—of old time *neighbours* only, now all were brought nearer to one another, and now they are brothers. The very word *humanity* and the idea which it expresses came in with Christ; never before had the oneness of the human race been thought of. It is this sacredness of human nature —its greatness, its dignity—which is declared and secured by the mystery of the Incarnation,—that God should dwell in man; by the Crucifixion,—that for man He should lay down His life; by the Resurrection,—that man should be exalted above all principalities and powers, and should sit upon the Throne of Heaven beside the Majesty on High. This reverence for humanity constantly meets us in the utterances of Jesus Christ. "What shall it profit a *man*," He asks—"a *man* if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" As if He set up the balances, and on the one side He

put the round world and all that therein is—wealth, dominion, glory, honour, all things—and the man outweighs them all. Though the man be stamped and branded with vice, though he be too bad for earth and fit only to be nailed to the Cross, yet is he so dear to Christ that such an one is reckoned worth dying for!

And now His followers go forth into a world redeemed not with silver and gold but with *the precious blood of Christ.* Now was there an awful sanctity and preciousness investing every man and woman and child. No man was any more a mere beast of burden—he was made in the image of God. No woman, whatever her position, was a toy for the passing whim of lust—the great love of God held her dear, and thus endeared her to all His children. Every little child was sacred by the childhood of their Lord and Master, hallowed by that hand which blest the children, bound to the heart of His disciples by the love that had called them His little ones. Of theories, theologies, definitions, these disciples perhaps knew

very little; but love is truest knowledge, and with them love to everybody was supreme. What a great outburst of brotherly love fills these early chapters of the Acts! Before Peter had seen his vision, a great revival has set Samaria—above all places—in a blaze, and burned up old feuds and melted all into a blessed brotherhood. Need and poverty thrust no man down into suspicion or neglect; but as with the Master so with the disciples, in the very need they found their opportunity for service. He Who was rich and for their sakes became poor, was their Example as well as their Saviour; and they could be Christians *only* as they had the mind which was in Christ.

O for a breath of this Christlike Christianity! O for a gale of it, like the mighty rushing wind of old! Where is it? *We* ask what a man is worth, and count the answer by his income. *We* reverence not man, but the accidents of his position, titles, liveries, circumstance. The only Christianity which Jesus Christ acknowledges is that which treats every man as brother. The

man's worth is himself, not his gifts. How are we rent and torn asunder for want of this one thing —true brotherliness, reverence for humanity! We hear of the sacredness of property—and it has its sanctities, for that too is of God; but we want to hear infinitely more of the sacredness of humanity. And this must reach upward as well as downward. It is not Christianity which blames or hates a man for being rich. The poor man has to love the rich as well as the rich man love the poor. It seems a hopeless thing that men should ever come to believe it, yet is it most true, that all men are bound by the love of God and the brotherhood of Christ into a closer union than any ties of social position can ever bind men. All sorts and conditions of men need this great brotherliness. We are marked off from all other creatures not only by our need of God, but by our need of one another. It is the wild beast only that is independent. The highest are as often shut off from other people by their height as the poorest are shut off by their poverty. There are

as many sad hearts and burdened lives in the West End as in the East. And there is an awful mockery in weariness and want amidst such abundance. To have so much and yet to find so little in it! The rich need sympathy, and they get envy—that cruellest regard. The poor, too, need sympathy, and they get it from one another, which the rich do not; but, alas, how often are they dreaded and scorned and suspected! The great middle class, certainly the happiest of the three, is exposed to the envy of those below them, and the scorn of those above them; whilst genius too often sits mocking the wretchedness of all.

Now, for every man and woman who calls Christ Master, the great question is this—*What can we do amidst such a state of things—scattered individuals without any great influence?*

Well, do not wait until things are set right for us—these early disciples certainly did not do that. They believed that they served One Who was come, *not coming*, to set things right, Who was manifested already to destroy the works of

the devil. Do not wait until we can find some definite plan that commends itself to everybody's judgment. What we have to do is to give ourselves up to Christ for the fulfilment of His great purposes in us and through us. We have in His strength and for His sake to live the life of a Christlike brotherliness. Do not begin to think of such a life as a lofty ideal, too high for commonplace and busy people—that, too, is what these disciples did not do. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you," is a promise to us. Let us boldly ask for the glorious portion of good that is ours, and then, having the power, we too can follow in the Master's footsteps.

Let us *consider* the poor. Think about them tenderly, resolved to help them as wisely and well as you can. Here, too, does the proverb hold good that necessity is the mother of invention, and the necessities of *love* alone have omnipotence for their designs. *God is love;* and it is good as it is true to think that as every sun ray that touches the earth has the

sun at the other end of it, so every bit of love upon God's earth has God at the other end of it. Love, true love, is the only law. When love, true love, says *it must be*, everything in God's universe waits to carry out the bidding. Loving, Christ-like, tender *considerateness* is mainly needed in the world. Here is an extract from a statement by one who knows of what he writes :—

The poor herd together as best they may without even the scanty decency which the artisan, with a single room for a home, manages to secure. Intermixed with the working-class population, in the same street, next door, not infrequently in the same house, is the vicious population. From the daily sight and hearing of hideous, loud-tongued vice, the women and children cannot escape. A decent working man from the quiet country (there are nearly a million and a half of country-born people living in London) must put up with a room. He is amazed at the scenes around him. He cannot escape from them. Alas! he quickly gets used to them and falls into London ways.

"That is very sad," you say; "but what can we do?" How have other great evils been removed but by the great brotherliness that has taken the matter to heart, and thought and prayed and talked until the people indignantly demanded a remedy at any cost? For this, too, which lies at the source of the misery and vice and drunkenness of London, there is a remedy, if only love were widespread and strong enough to compel it.

One result that would follow immediately from such considerateness is that every church and chapel would have some place open every night,—warmed, cheerful, and attractive, as easily got at as the public-house, as comfortable as the bar-parlour; where men and women and young people could sit and read without being either lectured or patronised—but welcomed simply as brothers.

I believe schoolrooms, too, would soon be opened as workshops, warmed, and to which girls could bring their work. One good man in the East End of London has set the example; and, by getting the work-girls thus together, has got rid

of the terrible middle-man. It would be a simple matter to have such a "church parlour" in connection with every place of worship. "*The streets, the music hall, and the public-house stand to these people in the relation of much that is called home in the country. They have no other resort from the one room, the heat of summer, the fog and cold of winter. The churches, chapels, and schools are generally closed, except for purposes in which the mass of people feel no interest. It is a terrible thing to say, but to many it is no wonder that these men bless the public-house which curses them, and bitterly oppose those who would shut it up.*"

In an article in the *Nineteenth Century* of February 1887 the writer, an authority on the subject, says: *They—the artisans—see the churches well-built and nearly always shut up; they see the public-houses, towering above their own small houses, blazing at every turn, and always open; they see their own small rooms, often badly built, always too small for even the little furniture and often large families.*

Some time ago I was going down a main thoroughfare of the city in which I then resided, when I saw about thirty men who were at work in some way about the road, laying drains or something of that sort. It was the dinner-hour, and there in the pelting rain they sat eating their provision—about as dreary and cheerless a set as one could see. In that road, within a mile, there were no less than five places of worship. But the very nearest was that of which I was then the minister. I at once got the schoolroom opened, and bade the men welcome; promised it should be at their service so long as they were anywhere near; and had a fire at which they could warm their coffee and themselves. I told them that they were at perfect liberty to smoke after dinner, but the whole time not a man touched a pipe within the walls. It was the instinct of a true gentleman, awakened by a little act of kindness. When their work lay farther down the road another place was similarly opened to receive them. Now comes the interesting part of the story. On the

Sunday some of those men walked a long way and endured the infliction of a sermon, because as one explained, "You see one good turn deserves another." I certainly much appreciated the kindness of that good turn. Of this be sure, though it was so little a matter—a cost of half-a-crown for extra cleaning covering the whole outlay—those men will henceforth carry a more kindly feeling toward the religion of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray earnestly for the Christlike brotherliness toward men, and opportunities of service will not be lacking.

Another thing which assuredly should be seen to, and that very speedily, is the neglect of the godly poor by the churches. Surely Christ our Master is alike astonished and indignant at the extent to which we lavish money upon the fabric in which we worship Him, and leave the poor members of His Church—by their very religion refined and sensitive—to the miseries of pauperism. It takes a vast advocacy, which is but slightly successful,

to rouse the Church to think about consecrating one-tenth of the income to *all* religious uses. The Jew gave three-tenths, *and one-tenth was wholly for the poor.* The only direction in the New Testament about "laying by" is in relation to the poor. The three religious organisations that wholly support their poor are the Jews, who are a great deal nearer to the religion of Jesus Christ than are most Christians in this respect, at any rate; the Friends, and the Plymouth Brethren: the three that spend least upon luxurious worship. May we not insist upon this as the mark of a true Church, since Jesus Christ has made it again and again the test of our religion? How immediately this Christlike care for the poor followed upon the baptism of power! Turn to the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the thirty-third and thirty-fourth verses: *And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses*

sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

The first appointment of officers in the Christian Church was to this care of the poor; and the seven deacons were appointed "to serve the tables."

How significant is the contrast in St. Mark's record of how, whilst the disciples were marvelling at the manner of the stones, Jesus was far more interested in a certain poor widow who came bringing her gift to the treasury! The fabric, however costly and beautiful, has little charm for Jesus beside a living, loving heart.[1]

[1] "Any religious community which does not provide for its own poor—that is for those who, in happier times, have consistently maintained a religious confession in communion with it—stands self-condemned. The relief of such is the special business of the pastor and officers of the church; and if any poor member is suffered by them to fall into such want as to be compelled to apply for extraneous alms or parish relief, the church is convicted of want of brotherly love, has denied the Christian faith, and is worse than infidel."—*Social Wreckage, by F. Peck.*

Well may we ask, startled and alarmed, Is it the Church of to-day which shall stand knocking at the closed door, vainly crying, "Open unto us. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" Is it to these that He will say, "Depart from Me. . . . I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in. . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

When once—and only once—Christ lifted the veil of the world beyond, it is to reveal one tormented in the "white heat of God's indignation," whose offence was not that he was rich—Abraham was as rich as Dives, perhaps richer—his sin was in this—that he found life's good in his goods, and not in doing good; *and that he left his poor brother at his gate, unpitied, unrelieved.*

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

We are Witnesses

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me."—Acts i. 8.

WE cannot please ourselves as to whether we will be witnesses or not. If we make any profession of religion at all we *are* witnesses. The mere fact that we go up to the House of God, and have to do with religious matters and religious people, is enough to make the world judge of religion by our lives. We *are* witnesses. The danger is lest we should be witnesses *without the power.* A bad witness has lost many a case. Think if some friend, an utter

stranger in the place, were arrested and brought before the judge in connection with some suspicious circumstance, the whole question being one as to character; and now I am called as witness. My friend leaves the matter wholly in my hands. I would die for him, for I owe him everything; but, alas! I am confused in my statements, and they seem to be contradictory. I leave out what I ought to have put in, and what I do say is misunderstood. My friend looks at me, surprised and grieved. The judge shakes his head. The counsel for the prosecution sits down with a smile; it is plain enough that the case has gone as he would have it.

Who is that? Jesus Christ, my Saviour. He is ever at the bar of public opinion; and whether men shall accept Him, or whether they shall reject Him, depends upon the evidence we give as to His character. Now are our faults and failings put down to Him. Well might He bid His disciples tarry until they were endued with power from on high—the less the world saw of

them the better. If we could only keep all the un-Christlike Christians out of sight, the great hindrance to the triumph of the Gospel would be gone. The man who makes a duty of family prayer in the morning, and then gets up to be hard, impatient, angry, makes his Christianity hated. The children and the servants say, "*That* is religion!" and they ridicule it. And they are right, quite right. If the religion of Jesus Christ does not make us gentle and loving and tender, whatever is the good of it? The man who goes to the House of God on Sunday, and is earnest in church work, and then on Monday can be keen in business, inconsiderate of others, hard and grasping, as eager after the world as anybody else, provokes the scorn of the world. It shrugs its shoulder and sneers, "*That* is your religion!" It would surely be better to tarry at Jerusalem, to be hidden altogether out of sight, for these things do crucify again the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. These things do make men cry in derision and scorn, "*Away with Him, crucify*

Him!" Surely it were a thousand times better never to stir in our discipleship until we get the power from on high.

Does this sadden us? And more than sadden; it may perhaps altogether dishearten us. It seems to say that unless we are *perfect* we had better not be Christians at all. And yet if we are not to begin until we are perfect, we shall never begin at all. We are His disciples, not because we are good, but because we want to be so. It does seem hard that in the great principles of life we should be true to our profession, and yet that all should be lost because of occasional and very superficial tones and tempers.

Well, is it not so, in everything, that all depends upon these little matters which make perfection? What is it to me that a picture should be true to the great principles of perspective, if it is defective in the little superficial matters of shape and colour! We may resent it as much as we please, the terrible fact remains—we

do stand before the world as *witnesses to Christ*, and the world judges of the Saviour by those who profess to be saved; and their defects, great or little, become the defects of their religion.

But let us turn again to the company of the early disciples. Can you think how each of them would have felt if this purpose of their discipleship had become clear to them—that they were to go forth and live over again the Christlike life? The full purpose, doubtless, was somewhat veiled from them, but it is easy to think how it would have affected them if only they could have seen it.

I think John rises first, and slowly goes forth from the little company, his face full of grief, and his heart too full for any utterance except in tears—"I could never let men see what HE is like," he thinks within himself; "never. Alas! what fires rage in me! Did I not want to call down the judgment of Heaven upon those Samaritans? Little wonder that the Master named me 'A Son of Thunder.' How could I

ever let men see in me His gentleness, His patience, His tenderness, His love? If only it had been to tell men about Him, to work for Him, to die for Him—*that* I could have done. But to have in me the mind that was also in Him, and to live His life! Would indeed that it were possible!" and again there comes the sigh of despair.

Next follows Thomas; poor Thomas! always somewhat alone, one thinks. He, too, rises very sadly, feeling that he must go. If John can never be a true witness for the Lord Jesus, what, then, shall he do? If he were like the simple-minded Philip, or the outspoken Peter, he might have some hope; but as it is, he seems the very last man to go forth in such a service.

Then Philip rises, looking about him as if to see what others should do, that he might find some loophole of escape, open-eyed and wondering. "Ah me!" he thinks, "there is no chance for me! If I were only good like John, or clever like Thomas, or brave like Peter!" and he sighs

to think that he is like nobody but himself. "I seem to have no gifts, and could never, never let men see what He is like." He, too, must go.

Then comes Peter. The tears creep down his face. "A witness to Him! to live His life amongst men! Alas! had he not denied his Master thrice, with oaths and curses? He hoped he might have lived to show his Lord that he did love Him, but he could never live to show the world what He was like." He must go.

And so, one after another, all are going forth. Who could ever count himself fit for such a service—*a witness unto Him!* And you and I, dear reader, must not we sigh and go forth too—so dull, so slow to understand, so fickle, so cold, with so little aptitude for discipleship, with so many, many things that say, *I never knew Him?* How could we ever let men see His beauty and His worth?

But Jesus looks upon them all, with eyes that read them through and through—John, Thomas, Philip, Simon—the whole of the company, and He

said, YE. He did not pick and choose amongst them here and there, but all stood upon a level, and all shared alike in the great promise. And blessed be God, He looks upon thee and me, and though He knows *us* through and through, still He says YE. Natural defect is no hindrance to witness-bearing, for it is not what we are that is to be considered so much as what the great Lord can make of us. It is not what we have, but what the Lord can put into us, that settles everything. *Ye shall* RECEIVE—there is our deliverance, there is our hope. Now may we look forth upon the sacredness of our high calling without fear, for we look up and there is the supply of all our need. *Ye shall* RECEIVE—speak it over to yourself until the heart begins to feel the force of it. Take your Bible and underline it by way of scoring it on the heart.

In my own Bible I find the word underlined, and it has become to me an illuminated and illustrated text. Some years ago I was travelling in the train; seated in a carriage alone, I had the

Book open at this first chapter of the Acts. I was thinking of "the Higher Life," of which just then we had heard a good deal—vexed and angry at the little headway, and still less *heartway*, that I could make in the matter. There was a life of which I could conceive, very bright and very beautiful, like a star. "Like a star, indeed," I said, half-scornfully, "a long way off, and I have neither wings nor ladder long enough to reach it."

Then my eye fell upon the word *receive*. The word took hold of me in its grasp. *This* was something very different. This was not *my* climbing up, but the coming down of that which I needed. This was not a thing wrought out of me by agony and effort, like the iron ore of which the poet sings—

> "And battered with the shocks of doom,
> To shape and use,"

but something put into me like a seed in the earth. "*Receive*," I said, with my difficulties silenced and ashamed; "of course I can receive. That is what the baby can do, *receive* That

needs no genius, no goodness, but only want. Any beggar can take sixpence if it is given to him."

I lifted my eyes and looked out of the window. There had been a long drought, and now a gracious rain had just set in. The showers fell on the woods and the fields, and on the gardens of the mansion just in sight, blessing everything. But just outside the wayside station was a little cottage, and at the corner of it the old woman had set her broken pitcher, and it was filled to the brim. The scene became a parable. "My Lord," I sighed, humbled and grateful, "I cannot bring Thee a soul of which Thou canst make a Paradise wherein Thou canst walk and talk with Thy child; but I do bring Thee my poor heart —Fill it to the brim."

Ye shall RECEIVE—stay your thoughts upon the word until it kindle longing, expectation, the boldness that claims it as your own.

Ye shall RECEIVE. How vast a difference it

makes! the reception of new life, partaker of a new nature. In the ditch there grows the briar, scratching, tearing, a sign of the curse. It sighs within itself and says, "Ah me, I cannot think what I was made for. I have got no beauty and no worth. If I were only the bunch of violets on the bank there, I might gladden some heart—but a briar! If I were only as much use as the corn on the other side of the hedge, if I could only feed the hungry world—but what good can a briar do! If I were but the oak tree whose branches come out so far, and whose leaves make such merry music with the breeze, and play with the sunshine and shade—then I should be some good. But only to be a briar!" So have our hearts cried within us—without love, faith, earnestness, without any promise or possibility of good, so unlike everybody else, scratching and tearing, harsh and unkind—a sign of the curse, indeed; we wonder, it may be, what we are made for.

But now here comes the gardener, and digs up the briar by the roots, and plants it in his garden.

And the briar is almost ready to pity him. "Ah, he doesn't know me," says the briar, "or he would not waste his time like this. He will never get any good out of me—a wretched briar covered with prickles!"

But the gardener laughs. "If I cannot get any good out of thee, may be I can put some good into thee,—we shall see." And he goes on his way.

But the briar was sadder than ever. "In the ditch it was bad enough, but here, to be amongst such sweet and dainty flowers on every hand, and still be only a briar! Well, there! I knew that I should never come to anything!"—so it bemoaned its worthlessness.

Some day the gardener came and made a little slit in the bark, and put a tiny bud in it and fastened it there. A few weeks only had passed, and everybody gathered about the beauty of a rose,—the size, the colour, the fragrance of it, all were perfect. See, it is our poor friend the briar that grew in the ditch. There is the old appearance, the old outside, but oh, the new unfolding!

Your Father is the Husbandman. He understands this rough stock of our humanity. He knows its evil nature and its little worth. But He knows how to put within it the new nature—the divine. Still there is the old personality, but oh, the new unfolding, the sweetness, the beauty, the worth, the glory of it! *Ye shall* RECEIVE. Not of our struggling or strife does it come, for it is not from within that this grace must spring, but *by our surrender to the Husbandman*—letting Him have His own way perfectly with us in everything. If only we will suffer Him to put into us what He can, then shall He get out of us what He wills. *Receiving* is more than asking, it is claiming and taking. Ask and receive. Be definite and be bold in your request. Do not put any fancied or wished-for experience in place of faith. Go boldly and ask for this gift of the Holy Ghost, and then come forth saying, "Now, because God has promised, the gift is mine—*must be mine.*" The manifestation of His indwelling may be gradual as the development of the bud in the briar, but

be assured it shall be. The manifestation of the power may be different from what we are looking for, as it was different from that which these early disciples expected, but this shall infallibly be ours —We shall be witnesses unto Him.

Ye shall receive power. The words mean more, very much more, than the parable of the briar indicates. It is not the reception only of a germ of new life that is promised; it is a change of soil, of atmosphere, of condition. We are told that the shivering weeds of the Arctic regions are nothing less than our forest trees—the sturdy oak, the stately elm, "the ash for nothing ill." The very grasses and ferns of our climate become, in the tropics, trees. Who knows of what development we are capable when we are lifted from the dreary realm of our coldness and doubt, and dwell in the summer of God's Presence, in the noontide of His favour; and when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit given unto us? How often have men and women without any special genius or great gifts risen up into resistless

power for God by the indwelling might of the Spirit! So to us may the promise be fulfilled—"He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David."

All this is for us. Let us receive it.

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

The Victory Illustrated

LET us go back a century and a half ago, and compare the condition of things then with the condition of things to-day. In the year 1724 "gin-drinking infected the mass of the population with the violence of an epidemic."[1] It is said that every sixth house in London was a gin-palace. Hogarth's cartoon retains the sign which stood outside the doors of these drinking dens—"Here you may get drunk for a penny; dead drunk for twopence—straw provided." The public-houses were open all

[1] Lecky.

night. Public opinion did not hold the character of any man to suffer through drunkenness. Dr. Johnson says to Boswell: "I remember, sir, when every *decent* person in Lichfield got drunk every night and nobody thought the worse of them." It was the mark of a *gentleman* to get drunk, and the standard of comparison was as "drunk as a lord."

Again, in the social habits of the upper classes profane swearing was held to be a mark of good breeding, and to take the name of God in vain in almost every sentence was the mark of a gentleman and even of a lady. Look again at the sports of the people, perhaps the truest index to their character. On the Sunday the people gathered for cock-fighting, bull-baiting, and other cruel sports. If we could have stepped into the midst of the eager and excited crowd we might have cried indignantly—"This ought to be put down by law." But how impossible it would have seemed. How indignantly it would have been scouted.

The members of Parliament were the ringleaders of the sport. The clergy thought themselves fortunate to own a winning bird.

Now where is all that gone? What has made drunkenness a low and beastly habit? What has made swearing an utterly vulgar thing? Why has the law stepped in and put down cruel sports? Do you say that education has become more general, and that culture has brought in other and more refined tastes? No; it was the educated and cultured classes who led the fashion in these things. There is but one explanation. Wesley and Whitfield were filled with the Holy Ghost, and as they preached here and there a little company of men and women were converted—not many in comparison with the masses of the nation. And these converted men and women went forth amongst the neighbours and began to live a Christlike life. Each became a new moral standard amongst them. Each was a skylight through which the heavens shone down into the midst of the little community. Each of them

witnessed that there was another life than that to which they had been accustomed, and *that* in every way a better and happier life. Each became a living conscience in which things were so much more definitely black or white than they used to be—blessedly good or uncomfortably bad. Each was a window through which men and women saw beyond the little present out into the eternities and the infinities. That wrought the reformation —*witnesses unto ME.*

That is the Power which is going to win the victory still—the power of the Holy Ghost making men live out this Christlikeness. We can think of no evil in our midst to-day which cannot be swept away as easily as those of the last century. Take the curse of horse-racing, with its natural besetment of gambling, infesting all grades of society. He would be a bold man who should say that this thing should cease—a thing sanctioned by the name of the Queen ; buttressed by the wealth of the aristocracy ; having such vast sums of money expended upon it. Yet let there come

a quickened religious life in this realm, and this mischief shall as surely go as other mischiefs have gone. If only men and women who are called Christians will set themselves in everything to be Christlike, each becomes the germ of a new life in society; and the sins and curses of society fall off and are left behind, if only the life of Christ is made to permeate and heal it.

Some time ago I stood on the east coast of England, and looked out over a stretch of oozy slime and ill-smelling mud. There were the barges high and dry, lying on their sides—no matter what cargo they carried or how skilful the captain, they were on the mud; no good their heaving the anchor or hoisting the sail—all this availed them nothing. And as I looked out upon it I thought within myself—What is the remedy? Were it any use for the corporation to pass a bye-law that every citizen should bring pot, kettle, or pan filled with water, and pour it out upon the stretch of mud? But as I watched I saw the remedy—*God turned the tide.* In swept the waters

of the sea and buried the mud, and then came the breath of sweetness and life. And it flowed in about the barges, and instantly all was activity. Then heave-ho with the anchor, then hoist the sails, then forth upon some errand of good. So is it that we stand looking out upon many a dreadful evil that fills us with dismay—drunkenness, gambling, impurity, the foul blots of our opium traffic, and the licensed lust still defiling our colonies. Is there any remedy? And the churches, so very respectable, dreadfully respectable many of them —but, alas! high and dry on the mud,—for these, too, what is the remedy? We want the flood-tide —the gracious outpouring of the Spirit; then must come the roused and quickened churches; the Christians transformed into Christlike men and women, who shall demand righteousness so persistently, so vigorously, that at last even the unjust judge is wearied into avenging the wronged widow of her adversary, and the Parliament is compelled to do something to quiet the conscience of the nation. It is ours now if we will have

it—"*Ye* shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

Do not let us think for a moment that we can sink our individual responsibility in thought of the churches. All great revivals have begun in the power of one or two Christlike men or women. One man full of the Holy Ghost has shaken a neighbourhood, a nation like an earthquake.

Some time ago I was going over a gun-cotton factory, and the proprietor said, "You see it is quite powerless in an open space." And as he spoke he took a cartridge and lit it, and it slowly burned away. "But when it is shut up in some confined space its power is very different. We took a piece like this some time ago, and put it underneath a building that was to be blown up. We lit the fuse, and hurried away into a place of safety, and waited for the explosion. Presently it came with awful thunder and hurled the mass into the air, and we looked out through the gap upon the shining sea beyond."

With the utmost reverence we may say that it is thus the Holy Ghost accomplishes His work. He is here to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come; He is here to hurl down the stronghold of sin—*but He waits for the consecrated heart.* Reader, as your eyes rest on this page God's word comes to you—*Ye shall receive power.* Never can you be clear of responsibility of the offer, whether it is accepted or whether it is rejected. Think again of God's love to the world; think again of the claims of Christ's infinite sorrow and shame and agony; think again of the purposes of your own salvation;—and now in His strength give yourself up to God, and claim as your own the fulfilment of this promise—*Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me.*

We have dwelt already upon the difference in the disciples before and after Pentecost; but turn to it again to see what Christ can do for the *individual* witness.

Back against the door of the Judgment Hall

where he will be least suspected, there sits Peter; back where he can mingle freely with the soldiers who gather round the fire. The fire flings its ruddy glare upon the breastplate and helmet, and now upon this weather-beaten fisherman. A quick-eyed soldier detects him; another catches his dialect, and together they cry—"Why, thou art one of His disciples." Instantly he denies it. Oh, shameful denial, and at such a time! Is this His witness?

And now a girl joins the company. The disciple may well have shrunk back where the shadows fall thickest, but holding up a lighted brand, it may be, to let the glare fall full upon him, she cries—"Thou art one of His disciples." Again the denial, angrily, and with an oath. "I saw thee with Him," saith the soldier. "His speech bewrayeth him," cries another. "It is the fellow that cut off my kinsman's ear," clamours a third. And yet again the oath, "*I never knew Him!*" Then in upon the tumult the crowing of the cock; and Jesus turned and looked. Oh,

Peter! poor, poor Peter! who of us dare cast the first stone at thee? Well mayest thou hurry out into the darkness and weep bitterly!

Can such an one ever become a witness? Yet to him it is spoken, *Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*

Step into the Judgment Hall again, this time by day. Here on the bench sits the High Priest and his kindred. And now into the crowded court they bring the prisoner. Look at him! Was ever such a hero? Head up, shoulders back, a face that looks about the court as if he knew not what fear meant; no quailing eye, no quivering lip, but bold as a lion he stands before the Judge. They hear the evidence against him, and now they consult as to the sentence; and as the court is silenced the Lord Chief Justice speaks:— "Prisoner, we charge thee straitly that thou speak no more in the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Flinging up the hands and making the chains clank again, he cries, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto

God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Who is it—this man of splendid courage?

Peter, Simon Peter.

What! he who crept inside the Judgment Hall, and swore he never knew this Jesus?

The very same.

What has happened to him? He seems very different.

Different! he is indeed. Why, he has received the power from on high, and that has made him so true a witness for Christ.

To thee it is spoken, and to me—*Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto ME.*

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

A Warning to the Church

"Quench not the Spirit."—1 THESSALONIANS v. 19.

WE have dwelt much upon the purpose of Christ concerning the Church, and the promise by which He would fulfil that purpose—*Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*

The Holy Ghost is come. But there is another and very terrible possibility; instead of our being filled with power we may turn from all this, and *we may quench the Spirit.*

THE WORDS ARE TO THE CHURCH. We may have thought of them only as a warning to the

unconverted, but if we turn to the beginning of the Epistle we find that it is written "*to the Church* which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ." No people ever seemed less to need such an exhortation than these. "We give thanks to God always for you all. . . . Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. . . . So that ye were ensamples to all that believe." Then as he came near to the end of this letter he writes to these the words, *Quench not the Spirit.*

Is it not to the Church that the most terrible words of this book are spoken? When Jesus Christ came He had pity for the outcast; He bent over the harlots; He welcomed the prodigals; He prayed for His murderers; but there were some to whom He could only speak words of

black and hopeless condemnation ; and they were members of the Church—the religious people, the very religious indeed. They were religious all day long ; they were religious in everything ; they would not eat a meal but their religion came into it—religious in their washing, religious in their dressing, religious in their looks, — yet these were the people whom Christ greeted as a generation of vipers, and Himself wondered how they could escape the damnation of hell. So it was in the time of Isaiah. To the people who came to prayer, and who brought sacrifice and offered incense, God spake words of terrible reproof— "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes ; when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

What, then ! is it better to be a drunkard, a harlot, a murderer, than to be a Christian ? Well, yes, it is, *unless your Christianity makes you like Jesus Christ.* The greatest responsibility in this world is the responsibility of knowing Christ ; and there is no condemnation so terrible as that which

rests upon the man who has had all the privileges and promises and opportunities of Christianity *at his disposal,* and yet he has turned them to no account.

There is no genius, no position, no gift which will ever bring upon any man such responsibility as this of knowing Christ. God has shown us His love in the unspeakable gift of His Son; He has given to us the Holy Ghost; He has given to us the Word with its visions and promises; He has revealed to us what He would have us to be. And now, whether on the one hand we respond to these gracious invitations, or whether on the other hand we sink down content with hearing of them and desiring them, *God holds us responsible not for what we have, but for what we might have. Not for what we are, but for what we might be.* Jesus Christ has opened to us the Kingdom of Heaven, and now, if we who ought to be princes are beggars only, hungry, ill-clad, useless to God and man, for us there is not pity, but sterner words of reproof than any

other can know. Think how that beside us, poor, earthy, selfish, shrivelled as we are, God sees that other man, the man we might be in Christ Jesus, rich with the gifts of God, strong with His strength, full of grace and truth—the Christlike man into which God is ever seeking to transform us. It is by God's offers and by our opportunities that we shall be judged and by which we shall be condemned—by that truer and fuller and higher life into which the Holy Ghost has come to lead us.

The work of the Holy Ghost which exposes us to this peril of quenching the Spirit is manifest again and again in the Epistles of St. Paul. Turn, for instance, to the Epistle written to the Ephesians. He does not once pray for them that their sins may be forgiven, but he starts from that point. "After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all the saints, I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you

the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him : the eyes of your heart being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." *That we may see what we may be*—that is the great work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and to lead us up to it. Of ourselves and naturally we are apt to make the hope of our calling a poor, low, outside thing—an escape not from ill-temper and selfishness and indolence and pride, but only an escape from hell ; not a power which is to make us like God and ready for His service, but only to take us to Heaven when we die. This is our natural tendency—to be content with religion without Christ-likeness, that which is so terribly denounced by the Lord Jesus. Now the Holy Spirit is come to open up to us glorious possibilities. He reveals to us sunny vistas and delicious retreats where we may sit in the Heavenly Places with Christ. He lifts the clouds and we look up the mountain-side, and a gracious voice bids us "Come up higher."

What we will make of all these revelations and promptings depends upon ourselves. We may give ourselves up to the Spirit's leadings, and then, *then only*, are we the sons of God. He will not drag us; He will not force us; but if we are willing to go with Him, listening for His voice and giving up our whole soul to His guidance, then shall He bring us into the large and wealthy place. Or we may hear of these things, and be content with vague wishes and idle dreams, and live with but bare memories of what was begun in us, for ever poor, for ever feeble, the great possibilities of God's grace all unknown—like some old mine-working, scarred and ruined, rotting beams and ruined walls, the rubbish-heaps half concealed by brambles and weeds—all lonely and deserted; and the treasures which might have enriched and blessed men, all unexplored and unpossessed. So, alas! it may come to be with us—the light gone, the inspiration lost, the Guide with His holy promptings withdrawn, the Spirit quenched.

Let us rouse ourselves to ask very earnestly—How may we quench the Spirit?

It is startling to find the suggestion which immediately follows these words—*Despise not prophesyings.* We feel at once that nothing could be so certain to quench the Spirit as the spirit of scorn; of the three steps downward to perdition—neglecting, rejecting, *despising*—the last is indeed the last; beyond it can only be the blackness of darkness. What room can there be for despising here, amongst these good people who are in the Church? *Quench not the Spirit—despise not;* has the Apostle forgotten to whom he has addressed his letter? This connection between holiness and rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit is yet more immediately set before us in the eighth verse of the previous chapter—God hath called us unto holiness. Therefore he that rejecteth (R.V.), rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth us His Holy Spirit.

Even as there is no surer way of putting out a fire than by pouring cold water upon it, so is there

no surer way of quenching the Spirit than by rejecting and despising His revelations and promptings. Yet it is a fact, strange, indeed, yet constantly noticeable, that whilst the only religion which the world believes in at all is a life of complete consecration to God, and whilst the world makes no allowance for the defects of those who profess to belong to Christ—yet the advocacy of such a life often moves the scorn of the Church.

Holiness is sneered at as the sentimental dream of weak-minded people, or it is the hobby of a few foolish persons who are always teaching impossible doctrines. My brother, even if the teacher be ever so ignorant and unlearned about a thousand things, is it not much more likely that the Blessed Spirit is in the voice which urges us to get nearer to God and to be more like Him, than in the voice which bids us not to trouble about these things, and to be content as we are? God hath called us, and is calling us, unto Holiness; he that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.

Or again, the Holy Spirit may set before us these further possibilities of grace, the richer things of the Gospel; and many at once begin to associate them with the failings of some unhappy professor who was slip-shod in his dealings, slovenly or conceited, or ill-tempered and unlovely. Well, is not that the reason for which the world rejects the Gospel of God's grace? And we know that none can avoid the terrible responsibility of rejecting the Gospel by any such excuses. He that despiseth extends his scorn to God Who hath called, and Who hath given us His Holy Spirit. There is a flippant and scornful way in which many people turn from the subject, saying—"*I don't believe in perfection, you know.*" Well, if we believe in imperfection, depend upon it according to our faith it shall be unto us. But what is the degree of imperfection which the Church tolerates? Here is a religious man who has misrepresented some matter, and you are indignant that a man who calls himself a Christian should do such a thing. Stay; you don't

believe in perfection, you know. This man pretended to be a Christian and he robbed you; dreadful, was not it? But why be angry; you don't believe in perfection. This man says he is a Christian, and he is proud and harsh, and you think that a man who is a member of the Church ought to be very different. Why? You don't believe in perfection. *Ah, but you do*—everybody does—*when it applies to other people.* It is only as a cloak and apology for our own failings that we keep these convenient limits of our creeds. And think you we can shape God's will and measure His grace by our belief? There is but one way of safety for us; it is to give ourselves right up to the claims of God in Jesus Christ, and to the power of His grace, saying and praying, "O Lord, save me as far as Thou canst, and when Thou canst save me no further, *then*, and then only, will I be content to wait."

"He that rejecteth"—"Quench not the Spirit"—"Despise not." The words set vividly before us the figure of Esau, who despised his birthright

and for a mess of pottage bartered the high calling and his relationship to the Christ. For a present and passing indulgence he let go the golden future and all its glory and high privilege. This is the way in which the Church most frequently and most terribly quenches the Spirit—*despising the calling of God.* When these great purposes of Christ are heard—and yet as if not heard, they kindle no desire, there is no enthusiasm awakened, they are not met by any ambition to be Christlike. We profess to be Christ's soldiers and servants, purchased by His blood and going onward into His presence; yet we do not make His service the great purpose of our life; we do not surrender everything to it—*that* place is kept for business or some pleasure. Is not this to despise our calling and to quench the Spirit? When society, gain, honour, position, pleasures the most trivial, have more charm for us than the presence and good pleasure of our Saviour Jesus Christ—is not that to despise our birthright and to be like Esau of old?

Again, there is another terrible possibility of evil here, one of the very worst that can befall any man. To see these things of God, these revelations of His will concerning us; to have all the better self standing up within the soul and saying, "There, that is what you ought to be, and what in your best moments you long to be;"—then some secret sin, or some silly fear, some gain or pleasure, whispers of difficulty and objection, and the man *becomes false to the light.* There is no surer way of quenching the Spirit and of putting out our own eyes than that. There is no lie so utterly ruinous to a man as to habitually live false to the light of God, false to all one's better self; to keep that better self like Herod kept John the Baptist, in the dungeon, flattering yourself that you are doing as much as any can expect if you listen to it now and then and hear it gladly. There is no surer way of undermining the whole moral nature, so that when the moment of decision and trial comes, as it comes to every man, the power of resistance is gone, and the man

is swept away an utter and hopeless wreck. *Quench not the Spirit—Despise not.*

Another way of putting out the fire of God and quenching the Spirit is to let it alone.

The gracious Spirit of God has revealed something of our high calling, and many listen, content to idly sigh after it. They talk of their desires, and how they long for these things, as if wishes were virtues. They nurse their desires, and take them out and caress them as if they really were the proofs and tokens of their grace. The laziest men are generally richest in desires ; they have so much time for wishes, and it takes so little trouble. It is not an accident that makes the proverb associate the folly of wishes with idle beggars. There is no more miserable way of cheating the soul than contenting ourselves with desire. "We can truly say that we do earnestly desire." Well, what of that! I doubt not that the place richest in good desires is a convict establishment, where everybody devoutly wishes that he had never got

in, and devoutly desires that he could get out. But wishing will neither keep them out nor get them out. There is nothing promised to wishes. Seek, and ye shall find ; ask, and it shall be given ; knock, and it shall be opened. Seeking, expecting, claiming, these are the steps up to possession. Beware of this habit. Satan tempts men on to indulgence in it like a narcotic—it soothes and stupefies the soul, and quenches the Spirit.

Yet, again, we often put out the fire of God *with shovelfuls of rubbish.*

There are some fires that cold water will not put out, only ashes or dust will avail. Ah! how carefully and utterly do many thus destroy all holy influence and all the promises of God! They have heard these revelations, looked out on these blessed promises and invitations, and then they turn away, saying, "Well, you know, I am not like other people. I am very peculiar ; I do not understand, or I cannot feel." And they pile up the list of their complaints and failings, and

they put the fire out. Oh, this dreadful rubbish! Our weakness, our folly, our peculiarities are no hindrances to Him, and the greater the hindrances are to us, the more reason there is that we should come to God for help. If we will give ourselves up to Him, He can do as much for us as He ever did for any. It is an insult, indeed, a sin and a shame, when the Holy Spirit of God comes to lead us on to these higher things that we should limit His grace and power by our failings and weaknesses. He is come to help such foolish and weak ones as ourselves. No wonder the Holy Spirit is grieved, insulted, quenched

And not content with this, such offenders generally get more of this same rubbish from their *circumstances*, which also are very peculiar. For others it is easy, of course, but for any one who is tempted and tried as they are! And they sigh in despair. Then they carefully collect all their worries and difficulties and keep piling them up until the fire is utterly put out.

Are you where God would have you to be?

If not, come out and right away at once, for you certainly ought not to be there. If you are, then be afraid to complain of circumstances which God has ordained on purpose to work out in you the very image and likeness of His Son.

There is no resting-place between these two—the great purpose of God fulfilled; the Holy Ghost received by us, and we made witnesses unto Christ, or the Holy Spirit quenched. The words come to us from God; let them arouse and alarm and urge us to the full surrender of ourselves to Him. *Quench not the Spirit.*

CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

Pharisaism

"He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees."—ST. LUKE xii. 1.

LEAVEN of the Pharisees—it seems a mistaken phrase. We do not wonder that the disciples were perplexed as to the Master's meaning. Pharisaism, surely, is not much like leaven. Leaven is little, leaven is hidden, leaven is noiseless; whereas Pharisaism was the very opposite of all that. Pharisaism was pompous; with Pharisaism to be seen of men was the beginning and ending of its existence. Its dress stood out with a very vivid distinctness; its

prayers were long and loud at the street corners; its alms were trumpeted; its presence was greeted with sounding phrases and stately courtesies. But the Master who searches hearts saw its subtlest spirit, and looking underneath the particular manifestation of it, named it rightly *leaven*.

Began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were a distinct sect, in every way wholly distinct from these poor fishermen. The Pharisees were the proudest and most exclusive circle of all the proud Jews of Judæa, walking the earth with a strut as if they had conferred an honour by condescending to be born in it; sunning themselves as if the great luminary had risen expressly for the honour of seeing such sublime specimens of humanity. What had these simple fishermen to do with such high lords? The Master seems twice to have spoken these words of warning; and the second time they turned to one another, wondering as to His meaning, until they whis-

pered : " He means that we have forgotten to take bread." Jesus rebuked their blindness. " O ye of little faith. Do ye not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up ; and the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up ? *Then* understood they how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees." But the explanation explained little. He bade *them* beware. What had they to do with the Pharisees ? A great social gulf yawned between them which none could cross. All their associations rose up as a bulwark between them. How could they possibly catch the infection of Pharisaism ? They did not breathe the same air, scarcely lived in the same world ?

Is it not ever thus ? The Pharisee—it seems the easiest thing in the world to sketch the character, so that in a moment everything within us shall flame in fury against these hypocrites. Yet is there one thing easier, and that is ourselves to be defiled by the leaven. The easiest thing in

the world is to belong to the Pharisees—perhaps the very hardest thing in the world is to know it. Take heed *ye*, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. It is, as the Master said, a leaven—a subtle thing that lurks within, working its mischief unsuspected.

The words reach back to a scene which gives them yet a greater fulness of meaning. The Pharisees, unable to entrap Jesus in their public encounters with Him, seek now for a more private interview, and one of them asks Jesus to share the morning meal at His house. Now He sits with the gaze of their unfriendly faces watching Him. At the outset they are horrified at seeing Him take bread without first washing His hands. Their miserable formalism had exalted it into an act of supreme religiousness. They held that it was better to kill a man than to commit such a crime as that. They are the more indignant because the offence was aggravated in every possible way. The Pharisee always bathed himself whenever he came from market, to wash away the

defiling contact of the common people; and Jesus had been pressed by a multitude so great that we read of them as having trodden upon one another in their eagerness to get near Him. He had cast out devils, and in many ways had come into contact with the unclean. The guests turn to each other with eyes that flash in anger at this outrage. Jesus at once avails Himself of the opportunity: "Ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made the outside make the inside also? . . . Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over judgment and the love of God. . . . Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. . . . Woe unto you, lawyers, also, for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers! Woe unto you! for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them . . . that the blood of all the

prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world might be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple."

"And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak many things; laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him." Doubtless the indignation spread to the disciples. John's eyes flash indignant fires; Peter can scarcely refrain his fury; and every face is full of tenderest pity for their dear Lord and Master thus beset and assailed, and thus moved to indignation. Now that unhappy time is ended. He comes forth again. Once more He breathes the air of Heaven; once more He meets the honest faces of His disciples. We listen for a sigh of relief, when, lo! He looks eagerly upon His simple followers, and says to them first of all—*Beware ye—ye of the leaven of the Pharisees.*

Beware ye—every sect of religion, every variety

of character has its own danger—perhaps its own form of Pharisaism. It is easy for us to see the Pharisaism of others. We can stone the Pharisee in an indignant zeal—and what then? When the storm is over, and we have hurled the lightnings, there stands the Master, with eyes that search us through, and He bends over us, and saith *unto His disciples*, first of all, *Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees.* We too may have our own form of Pharisaism eating the life out of us; spoiling all the beauty and blessedness of our religion. To those that are nearest and dearest to Him this word is spoken by the Lord Himself.

What then is Pharisaism? We shall mistake the whole meaning of the words if we think only of the coarse hypocrite, who knows within himself that he is a knave, wearing a cloak of piety only to hide his own foul purposes. Judas was a hypocrite, but he was in no sense a Pharisee. The Pharisees believed themselves to be really good people, the *only* good people, the exalted favourites of God, the very heirs of Heaven. The caution

will lose its force if we think only of the man who knows that his whole life is a lie. Pharisaism is a far subtler thing than that. Pharisaism is a poison germ that can only be developed in religion. Here you find it in a religion that controlled everything—a religion that was very earnest and very sincere. With the Pharisee, religion was his one supreme thought and pursuit. Bring your tests of a religious life and apply them here. *Does it pray?* Indeed it does, with the unfailing regularity of stated periods, a clear half hour by the clock. *Does it search the Scriptures?* Yes, indeed, it has the Bible at its finger ends, and studies nothing else, carrying out its directions in the minutest particulars. *Does it give freely?* That is reckoned a good sign. Is the pocket converted? Yes, indeed, a most exact and measured tenth, down to its parsley and peppermint. *Does it go to church?* With a splendid regularity; it is a very pattern of reverent devotion. And yet Christ hurls at it the most terrible denunciations that ever fell from His lips. Clearly we must find a

much more delicate test before we can detect this mischief—the leaven that can creep alike into Papist and Quaker, which can thrive alike in High Church or Low Church or Broad Church, and which can be as much at home in Dissenter as in either, and can flourish as well in the Methodist as anywhere else. There is one other test that we can apply, and this Pharisaism is at once betrayed wherever it lurks. *Does this religion make its professor Christlike?*

There is its doom. Beliefs held with a jealous orthodoxy, but without any living faith. Prayer regularly offered, but without any living communion with the Father of Spirits. The Scriptures read, but without any aspiration after true holiness. Abundant in almsgiving, but without any touch of brotherly kindness, without a breath of generosity. Religious, very religious indeed, yet an utter stranger to all meekness and graciousness and self-forgetfulness. That is Pharisaism. *Religion without Christlikeness.*

Is not this the supreme want of the age, as

indeed of all the ages? Alas! that it should seem so far off! Churches and chapels have we —hymns, prayers, missions, conferences, sermons, in bewildering abundance—but how wanting is the power that makes men Christlike. Is it not even yet a dream—that because a man is called a Christian you shall trust his yea and nay as you would another man's bond—to be sure that the religious master will consider his servant's interest as much as his own, and that the religious servant will do the work as well behind the master's back as before his face—that because a man professes to be a Christian he is quite sure to be generous and true and brotherly—that because the man of business believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he shall be through and through him an honest man, hating every lie as damnable—the whispered lie, the lie that is "well understood in the trade"—that every Christian is really and in everything seeking first to live over again the life of Jesus Christ?

And if our religion fail in this, is it not all a failure? The end of our redemption is to restore

us to our first estate, to the image and likeness of God. All things are at work to this one end —that we be conformed to the image of His Son. If we have not His Spirit, we are none of His. If this likeness to our Lord be lacking, in vain we plead our beliefs, our prayers, our raptures, our associations, our gifts. From within the closed door there comes the answer, grieved, yet unalterable, *I never knew you.* So rings the dreadful doom of the religion that stops short of Christ-likeness.

Let us search out, if it be possible, the cause of this failure. Take Saul of Tarsus, afterwards St. Paul, as a specimen first of the Pharisee and afterwards of the true Christian. "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," he says of himself, "and after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." But not therefore a hypocrite. No, indeed; zealous beyond any, as truly conscientious and ardent in his Pharisaism as afterwards in his Christianity. Now he becomes a Christian. What is the great difference in the

man? Before and after his knowing Christ he is alike earnest, devout, zealous. When did the Pharisee die and the Christian begin? It is here —*the centre of the old life was I, the centre of the new life is Christ.* If he speaks of the old life you catch the tone at once—it is *I*, the great pillar of it all is that *I*. Pharisaism is a capital *I*, a very religious *I*, finding in religion that which magnifies and exalts its importance. We hear it in the prayer, if prayer it can be called: "Lord, *I* thank thee that *I* am not as other men. *I* fast twice in the week; *I* give tithes of all that *I* possess." The consciousness that runs through it all is that same *I*. And so, of course, all things and all persons are measured by that same *I*. He that does not worship as *I* worship is a heretic; excommunicate him. He that does not think as *I* think is an offender; stone him. That is the essence of Pharisaism.

But the moment St. Paul finds Christ there is a new consciousness, a new centre; there is a new grammar in which *I* becomes the second person

singular, and *Thou* is ever the first person. And the first step in his Christian life is an absolute surrender of himself to Jesus Christ. *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* The Gospel according to St. Paul was not meant first of all for deliverance, but for surrender. *I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me.* And now for ever beats and throbs within him the consciousness of belonging to Christ. *I, Paul, the slave of the Lord Jesus Christ,* is the utterance that rises to his lips at every reference to himself. Christianity meant Paul's own death and burial, that henceforth Christ might be enthroned in his heart and glorified by every thought and word and deed of his life. That first; and then alongside of that, and growing out of it, *a passionate longing for the welfare of those about him.* "My little children," he cries, "for whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed within

you." And, yet again, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen after the flesh."

And turning from St. Paul to yet a nobler example, wherein lay the great difference between Jesus Himself and the Pharisees, whom He so sternly denounced? Each was very religious; each was fervent, intense, devout; what was it that severed them wide apart as Heaven and Hell? It was this—the life of the Lord Jesus Christ was an utter surrender of Himself, always and in everything to the will of God, and to the good of men. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." "Not my will, but Thine be done." And beside this surrender of the will, and growing out of it, was the surrender of Himself for the lives of men. "I lay down My life for the brethren." There is the great distinction which for ever severs the two; the essence and leaven of Pharisaism is *I*, the essence and strength of Christianity is

self-surrender to the glory of God and to the good of others.

How does this curse of Pharisaism poison the religious life of to-day! Look at it in our knowledge of Christ. To us it may seem an amazing thing that these Pharisees of old could come into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet never be conscious of His sublime goodness, that unblemished beauty of holiness, that great love which wrapped a world in its embrace, that lofty courage which never faltered in the face of all the terrible foes which threatened Him, that all this should never have arrested them, never have awed them. Pilate sees Jesus, and is afraid of the Sufferer so meek and so majestic. The Centurion bends low before the Crucified, and whispers with a troubled fear: *Truly this was the Son of God.* The common people heard Him gladly, and publicans and sinners declared that never man spake like this Man. This is ever the curse of Pharisaism—this utter darkness. No love is so blind as self-love; it is stone blind,

stone deaf, stone dead to all but its own little advantage.

Then said He to His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees.

Why marvel at their blindness? Are there not in our midst thousands and tens of thousands who know all about Jesus Christ, who know Him in the glorious completeness of His love, full-orbed; who know the story of His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection; yet He Himself is no vision of beauty, after whom the heart goes out in eager admiration; and His presence is no delight. There are thousands who kneel before Him as Lord, and who seek His blessing, and whose hopes of forgiveness rest in Him, yet their lives are utterly self-centred—"*I* think," and "*I* like," and "*I* shall"—this is supreme as ever. Their very religion ministers only and solely to the capital *I*. They have never seen self as a thing condemned, a thing to be crucified, dead, buried, put away for ever, that the new Man, the Lord from heaven, may come to reign within them.

Look again at this leaven of Pharisaism in our thought of forgiveness.

We make forgiveness an escape from Hell only —a title to Heaven. What Christ thinks of it He Himself has told us—in a tragic story, with a moral verily. There was a certain king, who came one day to some part of his dominions, and he bade the servants inquire into the accounts. Then it was found that his steward owed him ten thousand talents — an utterly impossible amount for any such man to pay—and the king commanded the steward to be sold, and his wife and children. Then the steward fell down before the king and besought his mercy; and the king, being moved with compassion, forgave him the debt and set him free. Forth came the steward from the presence of the king, and lo! as he went he caught sight of a fellow-servant who owed him two hundred pence, and, springing upon this miserable debtor, he grasped him by the throat and demanded the money. In vain his fellow-servant cried for patience; in vain for pity

—the steward cast the poor fellow into prison until he should pay the debt. Then the men of that city, seeing what was done, were very angry, and came and told the king. The king indignantly summoned the steward into his presence. "Thou wicked servant," he cried, "I forgave thee all thy debt because thou besoughtest me, shouldest thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" And the king was wroth and delivered the steward to the tormentors. Then comes the moral: *Even so shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every man his brother.*

I dare not make my forgiveness only my own deliverance. It is much more than that, or it is less than nothing. It is a power of God in my heart moving me and prompting me to be like God. Forgiven, that I may be made forgiving; finding mercy, that I be made merciful. Salvation is only salvation from hell if it is salvation from selfishness, from hardness of heart, and from

all unbrotherliness. Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

What is the remedy? Well, it is not in pleading guilty to all this and bewailing it. There is a Pharisaism that makes the worst of itself as well as that which makes the best of itself—"the poor, wretched creature" species, which spends its time in scolding and beating and starving itself, and thus intensifies the self-consciousness and more firmly establishes the capital I by the very efforts to overcome it. Our remedy is only in escaping from self to Jesus Christ; it is in receiving Him, and beholding Him, and communing with Him, and delighting in Him, until self is forgotten in the abiding Presence of Jesus Christ; and Jesus Himself becomes more and more the very centre of our being—the new and better self who liveth in us.

CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

The Christianity of Jesus Christ—How may it be ours?

"Be perfect, be of good comfort."—2 Cor. xiii. 11.

A GLANCE at the words is enough to make us feel how contradictory they are. *Be perfect*—that is a word that strikes us with despair; at once we feel how far away we are from our own poor ideal, and, alas! how much further from God's ideal concerning us. *Be perfect*—it seems to take us by the hand and to point us up some steep and slippery height, which only very skilful mountaineers have ever climbed,—and have we not heard that those who

reach the top are in great peril of speedily slipping down again? And *we* have to get up there; and to stay there! Is it any good our trying?

Be of good comfort—ah, that is very different. That seems to say, "Do not fret; do not fear. If you are not what you would be, you must be thankful for what you are. Certainly you might be better—but as certainly you might be worse, and in these things we must strike the average.

Now the question is this—*How can these two be reconciled?* How keep up any aspiration after perfection amidst so many conscious failures—still more, how amidst such failures keep up the aspiration with a cheery confidence? That is the sublime achievement of Christianity. Other systems of religion have held these precepts separately. Great heathen systems, of which we should speak with reverent honour, have said, "Be perfect"; but it has been by agony, by torture, by endless processes of self-extinction. They have left out the other part—*Be of good comfort.* Many systems have cried, "Be of good comfort—eat, drink, to-morrow

we die;" but they have had no place for the other words—*Be perfect.* It is only the religion of Jesus Christ that reconciles these two. He stands in our midst, and with the right hand of His righteousness He pointeth us upward, and saith, "Be perfect." There is no resting-place short of that. Yet with the left hand of His love He doth encompass us, as He saith, "Soul, be of good comfort; for that is what I am come to do for thee."

I. MANY PEOPLE LOSE BOTH THE PERFECTION AND THE COMFORT BECAUSE THEY PUT THEM IN THE WRONG ORDER. They put "be of good comfort" first, and then they let the "be perfect" find its way behind as best it can. Their test and proof of religion is *feeling happy.* There are in many of our congregations hosts of young people to whom this is the one thought—the end and aim of religion, *to make them happy.* They go home on a Sunday evening after a stirring sermon, and say, "Well, I think I am saved to-

night, I feel happier;" but to-morrow the happiness is gone, and they give up again in despair. With many a man feeling is the gauge by which he tests his spiritual condition, without allowing anything for east wind or the state of his health. The beginning and the end of his religion is this, *to be made happy.*

There are tens of thousands with whom this is the one great hindrance to the possession of the Christianity of Jesus Christ,—so that there is much need to consider the matter carefully and on all sides. Let us look at the matter boldly—IS THE GREAT END AND PURPOSE OF OUR RELIGION TO MAKE US FEEL HAPPY?

Surely it is a pitiable and unworthy ideal of life. Come into Westminster Abbey, and let us read the memorials of the mighty dead. Who are these that the nation delights to honour. Here are the warriors who went forth to meet troops of discomforts, and death himself in a hundred shapes. Did they feel happy? No, indeed—when bullets were whistling past them, and cannon

balls came uncomfortably close, and the shells burst about them. But what had they to do with feeling happy! They had to do their duty or to die in trying to—and they did it, the one or other; and the nation said these men are heroes. Turn to your Arctic explorers again, having all sorts of misery and death in many shapes. There was not much happiness for them, hemmed in by the gloom and fierceness of an Arctic winter; but what had they to do with feeling happy! The glory of the men was that they counted not their lives dear to them in the doing of their duty. And yet more worthy of honour than even these, though they receive much less, think of our brave lifeboat men, who when fierce storms break upon our coast, take their lives in their hands and go forth to the wreck. Happy? no, indeed—not as they think of the wife and little ones at home,—as they look out on the great breakers, and about them sweep the showers of foam, and all the thunder of the wind and sea booms on every side. Think of philanthropists and martyrs, who have

lived and toiled and suffered and died to bless their fellow-men, whose life has been an incessant toil and a perpetual sacrifice. And amongst these shall we set a highly respectable tombstone, and inscribe upon it the record—*Here lies a man who felt happy!* Noble person—who got up in the morning, and ate and drank, and bought and sold, and slept, and touched this lofty purpose of being —*he felt happy!* If that is the highest end and purpose of my religion I can find an altogether nobler ideal of life elsewhere.

If this is the purpose of religion, surely our Lord Jesus Christ has come the wrong way. Can we think of anything that could make us more completely and perfectly miserable than an attempt to secure our own happiness by the anguish of another? If I were a homeless wanderer, hungry, wretched, ragged, perishing, and unable to go a step farther in the bleak winds and piercing cold, and I sink at your doorstep—what if you should come forth and lay your hand upon my shoulder, and bid me come in and sit by your fire, and eat your

supper, and rest in your chair; and you would go forth to take my place in the bitter cold. Do you think I should feel happy! *Never.* I tell you your fire would scorch me; your supper would choke me; the comforts would be less bearable than my previous discomforts; and I should come forth and say—"Sir, either you will come in and share my good things, or I will come forth and share your evil things. I am not such a mean creature as to be made happy at a cost like this!"

Ah, my Lord, Thou hast spoiled my happiness. I take Thine hand, and therein I do feel that dreadful wound-print. I look into Thy Face, and thereon I do track that cruel Crown of Thorns. I rest me against Thy Side, and I remember how it was pierced and torn for me. My Lord, now is there but one satisfaction that can ever be mine. Take me and lift me up, and let me hang with Thee upon Thy Cross, that I may say—*I am crucified with Christ.* My happiness is spoiled by the pain and agony and shame and awful curse of Calvary.

There is no great virtue in feeling happy. I do not know that I could be much more confident of any man's honesty because he assured me that he felt happy; or that I could rely upon his word with more assurance on that account. I suppose a drunken man feels happy, or surely he would never pay so hideous a price for it. The prodigal felt happy, no doubt, when he was spending his substance in riotous living in the far country. Or here is a very picture of it—a sky of deepest blue, the woods ablaze with tints of autumn splendour, the acorns and the beech-nuts strew the leafy ground, and here lie the swine that have filled themselves with the husks—stretched in the sunshine. Take the picture and write under it the title—*feeling happy.*

We dare not deal with our children on this principle. If the boy have told a lie, what think you? shall I call him to myself, and as he comes, ashamed and afraid, with quivering lip and tearful eye, shall I lightly tell him not to mind? I want him to be happy—that is the great end of life;

let him fetch out his games, and shout at his play, and fill the air with his glad laughter! No, indeed—everything within us cries aloud and indignantly, Such happiness were a curse. Better pain, shame, grief—anything that should make him feel right down through him that a lie is an utterly hateful and damnable thing. If my religion is to make me comfortable in spite of ill-temper, and slipshod ways of business, and words that are not exactly true—then I say deliberately, better the very fires of hell than that comfort, if they could only burn into me and through and through me a great abhorrence of all that is evil.

Oh, we have not learned the first lesson of Christ's holy religion, the meaning of the Cross has not begun to dawn upon us, if we have not learned to see in it *how God feels toward sin*—that sin is a thing so horrible and accursed that only in all the awful scene of Calvary can we see it rightly. He must nail it to the Cross, and thrust it through with a spear, and bury it out of His sight. It means that sin has so defiled and

cursed us that God can find no remedy for us except in our being crucified with Christ, dead with Christ, buried with Christ; that the new Man, the Christ, be formed in us, and that we live now only in the power of His resurrection. . The word that runs through the Bible is not first of all happiness. The whole idea of the Bible—every command, every promise, every example, all the revelation of God, of Heaven, of Hell, all the life and sorrows and death of Jesus Christ, every breath and influence of it—teaches me that I want something very different from feeling comfortable. Running through the Bible is another word—a word that needs to be written in letters of fire right across our churches, and over our shops and factories; a word that we want stamped upon every product of our manufactures—the Christian trade-mark; we want it printed at the head of every ledger and wages-book; we want all transactions weighed by it and measured by it; we want all our words tried by it; we want all the gold and silver rung on this counter. RIGHTEOUSNESS—that is the

word. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His *righteousness*." "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but *righteousness*." David, parched and thirsty though he was, poured forth the draught of water from Bethlehem's well an offering unto God; it was a thing which the peril of his brave men had made too sacred for his own indulgence. Christ has shamed us by His own agony and curse out of all thought of our own comfort. He Who was rich stooping to all the rude discomforts of poverty; He Who is the King of Glory emptying Himself and becoming a slave; the Lord and Giver of Life yielding Himself to death, even the death of the Cross; He—pierced and torn and smitten,—dead. What for? Surely for anything sooner than this—that I may be made comfortable! There is but one end and purpose that can warrant such grief and agony as His, and that is our holiness. First, *Be perfect.*

It is precisely here that many earnest persons fail in the religious life—not for want of trying,

but for want of the right aim. It is an easy and pleasant thing to travel at the rate of sixty miles an hour when *the engine is on the lines;* but when it is off the lines three miles an hour is very difficult, and exceedingly uncomfortable. Many who are most conscious of effort, and even agony, are yet most conscious of failure; and how can it be otherwise? If God be for us we cannot fail; but if we move against His will and His way how can we succeed? If I fall across the machinery of some huge factory it is very likely to rend me; but if, on the other hand, I fit in with it and adapt myself to it, all the great forces shall wait upon me and minister to me. Is there, then, any unity in God's great universe—any one definite aim to which everything is adjusted, and up to which all things are working? Can I find out what it is, and can I fit in with it?

All things work together; here, then, is the first part of my question answered. *All things*—the material world, the great sun, the air, the endless life, the very stones and dust of earth; *all*

things—the busy commerce with its ten thousand interests; politics; social life; *all things*—gain, loss, pleasure, pain, the daily worries, the passing pleasure,—all things have one great purpose running through them.

All things work together for good. God has only got one good. He keeps that word for one thing only. All goods cannot make God's good. This alone is what He counts good—*That we may be conformed to the image of His Son.*

All things that I can ever have to do with are set to this one end—to make me like Jesus Christ. And the grace of God is the provision by which I am to be adjusted and held rightly towards all things. And now if, at the beginning of the day, I surrender myself to God, not to be taken care of, and fed and clothed, and prospered in business, and made happy, but *to be made like Jesus Christ*, then I am on the lines. If I will claim the grace of the Holy Spirit to hold myself rightly towards all things, I shall keep on the lines. Then shall loss and gain, pain and pleasure, good and ill,

be estimated not by any material worth, but by their contribution to the character, by conformity to Jesus Christ. If gain leave me more eager for the world and more covetous, then is gain an awful loss. If success bring pride and self-importance, then is success a dreadful failure. If pleasure dim and deaden my sense of God's Presence, and check my communion with Him, then is my pleasure verily an anguish. This is the only end, the test, the proof of our religion—*Does it make us like Jesus Christ?*

First, Be Perfect; and then, Be of good comfort.

But whilst many lose both by the wrong order, some lose both by leaving out the Be of good comfort.

They have heard the word "Be perfect," and all the heart has leapt in response to the appeal. They have felt through and through them that the religion of Jesus Christ is only worthy of Him or of us when it sets forth so lofty an ideal; that of

all things it is most miserable when the very religion which should for ever destroy our selfishness, itself makes us more selfish. Within us is a deep and abiding instinct that the religion of Jesus can find its aim and end in nothing else than this —*Christlikeness.*

But here at once is the possibility of another peril. "That is it," our hearts have cried, "*Be perfect!* Henceforth that shall be the one thing for which we will seek and strive until it is ours." And probably we go away and begin by consecrating ourselves to the Lord. We lay ourselves, and the family, and the character, and the possessions, all upon the altar. We tell the Lord we are going to give it all to Him, and keep it all for Him. And then with this great burden of our consecrated substance piled up on our shoulders, we set out to climb up the steep and slippery height of Perfection! Is it any wonder that very soon the dreadful struggle breaks down utterly, and we sink in despair. Suspicious of every motive, trying to bring every thought and aim into

the fierce white light of the Judgment Throne, questioning everything, doubting and bewildered, condemned at every turn—that indeed is to leave out the *Be of good comfort.*

Do we not see at a glance that all this struggling means that we are fetching in *I* to make *I* perfect? And the moment I fetch in this I, that moment I fetch in failure. If there is no other way than that, let us not weary and worry ourselves about it.

I cannot consecrate myself to the Lord. My purpose falters and fails in changing circumstances; I am fickle, forgetful, false. My lofty desires of to-day, to-morrow cease to soar, and sink beneath the clouds again, and rest once more with wearied wings indifferent upon the earth. The only consecration possible is not with me or my will. It is the entrance of the Lord Himself, His possessing and claiming and using me; that is the only true consecration. It is not my *giving* so much as my *receiving;* not my *surrender* to Him so much as my *acceptance* of Him, on which my mind is to be stayed.

But this agonised effort to make ourselves perfect is not always a failure. Sometimes it actually succeeds—then indeed only most completely to fail. Taking hold of the rebel self, another part of the same self saith, "Now I am going to make thee perfect." And self chips and hammers at self to bring it into shape, and hacks and hews at self until it fits into the ideal mould. And then it is polished with much sulphuric acid and sandpaper, and a host of processes are gone through,—with what result? This—that at last there is turned out the most unhappy thing that it has ever been our misfortune to meet—*from five to six feet of polished* I. A great mass of self-consciousness. How could it be otherwise? All the thought, all the desire, all the aim of life has been set upon self. And now this same perfected I becomes the standard by which everything is measured, and to which everybody must conform, or there is no hope for them in this world or any other. This, as we have seen, is Pharisaism.

Verily, if that be all, let us rather die in despair.

If Holiness, or Perfection, or the Higher Life—call it what you will—is a something that is to set me up on a pedestal and exalt me in wretched consciousness of my superiority to other people, let us pray God to bury us underneath the pedestal. There will be more hope for us, and we shall be a great deal nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven. If that is perfection, the best prayer we can offer is to be saved from it for ever and ever.

Thank God, that is not His way of Holiness.

Be perfect, be of good comfort. Do we not feel at once that if ever we are going to be that which in our best moments we want to be, it must begin in self lost, self forgotten, self not so much denied as self ignored, unheeded. And this is exactly what is meant by the word which the Lord Jesus used when He bade the disciple deny himself.

Be perfect. My faith in perfection is very weak when I look at others; it is extinguished altogether when I look at myself. *But when I look at Jesus I can believe in nothing else.* He is perfect in all

His works, and no other aim than this can ever satisfy Him. The work which He has undertaken to do for us would not bear His stamp if it stopped anywhere short of perfection; and for such a vast expenditure and cost I dare not think of anything less than this. *Be perfect.* Here it is that my faith in Holiness and my hope for it begin to live, as I see Him, as I linger in His Presence, and sit at His Feet. When He cometh, what limit shall I set to His grace? What failing shall He tolerate? What sin shall baffle His skill? So, as I stand looking up that slippery height, wondering how its summit is to be reached, He cometh with His gracious words—"My child, fear not! That which thou seekest is not in thy climbing up; it is in My coming down. *Be perfect.*"

Then doth my timid heart make answer—

"Yes, my Lord; since Thou comest to do it all, what else can I hope for!"

"*Be of good comfort.*"

"Yes, my Lord; what else can I be, since Thou art mine!"

The only Perfection of which I can think is spelt with five letters—J, E, S, U, S. This, and this only, is Holiness—Jesus received, Jesus communed with, Jesus welcomed, Jesus served, Jesus pleased in all the temper and spirit of the life. It is not in my understanding theories or theologies, not in my perception of methods, not in my experience of raptures or agonies, but in Jesus Christ received into the heart that He may do His own work in His own way. Look up to Him now. Claim Him and welcome Him as your own, able and eager to do as much for you as He ever did for any. Constrain Him to abide within the heart in which He seeks to make His home.

Be of good comfort. It is good to get in at the root-meaning of our English word comfort; very different from the meaning which has come to be associated with it. The word has come to be suggestive of a cosy seat beside the fire on some winter's night, when bleak winds howl and bitter

rains beat on the window-pane; and within the light and warmth one sits, with the charm of some entertaining book completing the enjoyment. But the word itself finds its true meaning illustrated rather outside in the darkness and storm, where is some poor woman with heavy basket on her arm, and a long and dreary way before her. She is not quite sure as to the road which leads to her home amongst the hills, and many fears add to the loneliness and weariness. Now comes one who speaks with such a kindliness that she cannot but trust him. "You seem very tired," he saith; "may I help you? Do let me carry your burden for a little while. I am going past your house, and I shall be happy to show you the way." And as he talks with her the heart grows light, and the way is easy, and the loneliness and fear are all gone. That is *Comfort*. *Co*—that is together with, or company; and *fort*—that is strength. *To strengthen by company*. That is it precisely. The moment we set out to live a better life, the gracious Master is ever going that way. And

with gentle love, winning at once our trust, He cometh to carry our burden for us, and to lead us on our way, bringing us thither where He would have us to be, and where we would dwell. *Be perfect, be of good comfort.*

Far up against the deep blue sky, lightly passing on the summer breeze, was a pure, white, fleecy cloud — a thing so utterly unsoiled, it seemed to belong to Heaven much more than to earth. The great sea lay and looked at it, and whispered to itself, "They say that thing of beauty was once down here where I am,"—and the sea sighed within itself; "how fair a thing it is, how peaceful, right up there amongst the stars, in the very bosom of God!"

And then the sea grew vexed. "It is nonsense. How could I ever get up there—heavy and clumsy as I am? And if I got there, how could I stay there? Besides——" and the sea was silent; it thought of the fierce passions that slept within it, the cruel storms; and it shuddered as it thought of the dreadful things that dwelt in its

depths—of the wrecked ships and the dead men. Then it sighed again. "Not for me, indeed. I could never be like that!"

And yet the sea could not rest. Still it looked and wondered and longed. Then it roused itself and said, "I will try." And it gathered its strength, and it borrowed the force of the wind. I saw it as it rose up in the strength of its purpose, arched in its pride, on in its desperate resoluteness, till it hurled itself against the rocks, and leapt high up a quivering column of spray, and it seemed to snatch at the height. Then it fell,—baffled, beaten, and as a hundred rivulets of foam it hastened to hide itself in the depths, as it hissed, "I knew it was not for me."

Reader, has my parable any meaning for you? Is it not the story of longings and strugglings and failure? Come, then, and it shall teach us the secret of success.

At last the great sea lay quite still in the silvery light of the morning, and it looked up at the sun. "Canst thou not help me?" it cried.

"The moon draws me hither and thither across the earth, but it cannot uplift and transform me. Canst thou?"

"Yes," said the sun, "indeed I can, if thou wilt let me." And the sun sent down a noiseless ray that shone upon it, and warmed it, and loosened it, and uplifted it. And lo! the sea knew not how, nor cared to know, but it cried, "I am there!"

And there it was, a pure, white, fleecy cloud against the heavens' blue.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. With eye and heart and hope and longing fixed upon Jesus Christ our Lord, He Himself bendeth over us, He shineth upon us, He looseth, He uplifteth. *How*, it is not for us to know or care, but this we do know—

WE ARE TRANSFORMED BY BEHOLDING.

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